

“DES PELADO”

EL
MARIACHI

Corrido Dos

SECOND DRAFT
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by
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For Educational
Purposes Only

INTRODUCTION

INT - TARASCO BAR ROOM - SANTA CECILIA, MEXICO- DUSK

P.O.V. of BUSCEMI bursting through the doorway into the bowels of the stench filled TARASCO BAR. Buscemi, an anglo character about 28 years and not in the best physical shape, rambles towards the nearest barstool, which seems a mile away in this forced perspective. He inspects the roomful of roguish, disgusting looking BARFLIES, nursing bottles of cheap booze and sour dreams of glory in this forgotten Mexican border town. His kind of people.

He takes a seat, trying to keep his balance on his uneven barstool as the SHORT BARTENDER finishes serving another customer. It's obvious from the guarded whispers and ambience that not everyone is here for booze's sake. Dealing's being done.

SHORT BARTENDER

What do you want?

BUSCEMI

booze...

SHORT BARTENDER

All I've got is piss warm, but inexpensive.

BUSCEMI

That's my brand...

SHORT BARTENDER

(looking him over)

Alright.

Short Bartender fetches the drink.

Buscemi soaks up the surroundings like a sponge: how many men are at the window seats, who's guarding the back, who's flanking the god forsaken altar of booze where the Short Bartender reigns king supreme.

Short Bartender serves him a dirty glass full of something that more than fits the description of piss warm and inexpensive. Buscemi swigs it coolly, savoring every rotten drop.

BUSCEMI

Well this is damn good.

Short Bartender doesn't have any reason to believe him.

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BUSCEMI

I'd say this is the best booze I've ever had.

Short Bartender knows his booze is cheap, but these undeserved compliments disturb him.

BUSCEMI

Actually....

Short Bartender tries to ignore him by waiting on one of his regulars.

SHORT BARTENDER

You need anything over there?

Negative nods from the Rogues. Nobody's gonna help him get away from this chatter box.

BUSCEMI

...I'm just glad to be alive right now.

Short Bartender grabs his own half full brew and sits back against his counter. He can wait this one out.

BUSCEMI

I was up a few towns away, you know Saragosa?

Short Bartender waits a beat before surrendering a nod.

BUSCEMI

I was visiting a bar there, not unlike this one, they served beer, not quite as good as this, but close... and I saw something you wouldn't believe...

Short Bartender is not on the edge of his seat.

BUSCEMI

I'm sitting there see... small table, all by myself. Now this bar... it was full of real low lives, I mean... I was wondering what I was doing in there... ya know? Not like this place here... No, I mean bad... Like they were up to no good, ya know what I'm saying?

A few Rogues exchange drunken looks...

Short Bartender's eyes stay fixed on Buscemi.

BUSCEMI

But I'm there cause I'm there, same old story. Anyway I'm all by myself and I like it that way. Not

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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BUSCEMI (cont'd)
saying a word. Meanwhile things are going on,
under the table kind of things. Not too obvious...
(leaning in towards BARTENDER)
...but not too secret neither.

A few Rogues seem to have nothing better to do than listen to Buscemi because that's just what they're doing.

BUSCEMI
(hammering the point home)
I'm sitting there...

Short Bartender's not even wondering when the story's going to start, he's pouring himself another warm one.

BUSCEMI
(beating a dead horse)
So... I'm sitting there...

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

POV of unseen STRANGER, opening the bar door, just as we saw Buscemi do in the opening shot. We hear Buscemi's voice over this dreamy, slow motion flashback.

BUSCEMI
(Voice Over)
...And in walks the biggest Mexican I've ever seen.
Just walks in like he owns the place. Big as shit. No
one knew quite what to make of him, or quite
what to think. But there he was... and in he
walked...

Now, understand. Buscemi is whiter than the powder they're trading 'neath the tables. His "biggest Mexican" observation brings slow head turns from the Rogues that heard him. They're all listening now... and Short Bartender even stopped his drinking. Mid sip.

BUSCEMI
Dark, too.

Buscemi is surveying the nearbys. He has their attention. This is more like it.

BUSCEMI
I don't mean like... dark skinned. No, this was
different. It was as if he was always walking in a
shadow.

(CONTINUED)

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FLASHBACK

We see Stranger walking tall, slow, and faceless towards the bar. The light from the bar hits him in such a way that you can only see details on his clothes. But his face is in a shadow, and his head is strangely backlit. He passes groups of seated, rough looking, unfriendly folk.

BUSCEMI

(voice over)

I mean, every step he took towards the light, just as you thought his face was going to be revealed...

Stranger nears a light, a bit of his face starting to reveal itself beginning at the chin and illuminating up to his nose...

BUSCEMI

...It wasn't.

We see the shadow CRAWL back down his face, obscuring his identity from everyone.

BUSCEMI

(slowly, otherworldly)

As if the lights... dimmed... just for him.

The mood is thick in the bar, now. The whole room is silent, listening. You can almost hear a low rumble permeating the room.

The mood is suddenly broken in half by a Rogue's RUDE LAUGH.

Short Bartender joins in. The Rogues go about their business. No amount of booze is going to change their mind about Buscemi. The verdict is out. He's full of shit and there's no point in listening to anymore.

BUSCEMI

(continues unaffected)

So this guy he takes a seat at the bar, asks the bartender for a soda pop, sits back.. says nothing.

SHORT BARTENDER

A soda pop?

Buscemi nods.

BUSCEMI

Now, I wasn't interested in his drink, I was more interested in what he was carrying when he walked in, some sort of suitcase, kind of heavy. He just sat that thing down on the stool 'side him as if it were his girl.

(CONTINUED)

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FLASHBACK

In flashback we see Buscemi peering over from his seat.

Buscemi's POV of a guitar case sitting next to the Stranger, whose face is in the shadows as he's served his soda pop.

BUSCEMI

Then, all of a sudden... the bastard spoke. Started talking low and whispery with the bartender, and you know he wasn't talking soccer. He was talking business, 'cause whatever he said it was upsetting the bartender. Especially when he mentioned...

Short Bartender gave up on this character a long time ago. He's finished his beer and is wiping the mug clean with a dirty rag. He sets the bottle on the counter beside him.

BUSCEMI

... he said something like... Bitch.. or... Bucho.
That's what it was. Bucho.

Short Bartender stops what he's doing. Buscemi gets a few slow head turns from the nearby Rogues who heard him. That low rumble is back, and pins can be heard dropping.

BUSCEMI

(sees he hit a cord)

Well whatever he said... It pissed off the bartender plenty. And some of those unsavory characters I told you about? Not class acts like these boys here, but real scum? They got plenty pissed too. So they get up....

(Buscemi stands for emphasis)

...and they start pulling guns and knives and what have you... starting some shit.

Buscemi has his audience back. He acts the scene out now, and we intercut between the flashback and Buscemi's live show.

BUSCEMI

Now this Stranger... he BOLTS out of his barstool like you wouldn't believe, grabs his case like it was a girl he's been assigned to protect and he DIVES into the middle of the room with it! Just dives right in!

Rogues exchange looks with Short Bartender at the sheer nonsense of it all, but what the hell else they got to listen too.

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BUSCEMI

Now I don't know what he does on that floor—as he's somersaulting but he's up in two shakes, the suitcase is wide open and he's pulled god knows what out of it but whatever it is it's the biggest hand cannon I've ever seen...

FLASHBACK

Stranger rises from the ground surrounded by angry scum and he levels what appears to be the **BIGGEST FIREARM** you've ever seen, we can't really tell because it spits blinding **FIRE** so fast you can't get a good look at it, nor the damage it does as **BODIES FLY** about the room, mostly in pieces, crashing into this and that. **KNIVES FLASH** and get **BURIED** in the wrong chests, **BULLETS FLY** and take out the wrong men. The place is a mad house and the berserker in the middle is the faceless stranger doing unspeakably impressive acts of violence, too fast for the human eye to register, but enough to make you wonder if he's the devil himself... and where'd he learn all those tricks?

His **SPURRED BOOTS** swoop around the room like a high powered ceiling fan, the **SOUND** of flesh being **SLICED** by the silver spur tips flashing like crimson lightening.

SHORT BARTENDER

(doubting heavily)

You're telling me you stood there and watched all this go on?

All Rogues turn to Short Bartender.

SHORT BARTENDER

You didn't even run for cover, or join in?

Buscemi is staring wide-eyed at Short Bartender like he's just not getting it.

BUSCEMI

What's joining in? I was frozen stiff! All I could do was watch this... thing tear the place apart! I mean it was amazing! Cutthroat scum bags were coming out of the woodwork, and dying much deserved deaths...

We see a few more incredible sprinkles of the show: **BODIES HURLED** out of windows, corpses **HITTING THE ROOF** and striking the ground hard, bags of loot and money spilling about...

(CONTINUED)

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BUSCEMI

I mean, don't get me wrong, this was no class act group of guys like you got in here...

Buscemi glances over his scumbag constituents...

BUSCEMI

...not at all, I mean those guys were world class turds, and I'm sorry but they got what they deserved. It was judgement night in that place. And the whole time...The whole time this was going on...

FLASHBACK

Death-like slow motion of the Stranger in action.

BUSCEMI

(voice over)

...I never saw the guy's face.

The rumble is definitely happening, and the Rogues are as quiet as mutes, and warm beer is the furthest thing from Short Bartender's mind.

BUSCEMI

...Not once. I mean who could? The place was raining blood.

CUT TO:

Dark, hard to see Stylized Shot of the Stranger standing alone in a HEAP OF BODIES, blood DRIPPING from the ceiling in a thick sprinkle. The Stranger slowly lowers himself to the ground and grabs hold of a dying turd.

BUSCEMI

(voice over)

So he grabs one of these guys, the only one still breathing. And starts getting information from him. I heard 'em talking, so I started walking over ... real slow, just for a little peak...

POV of Buscemi moving towards the Stranger, whose back is to Buscemi.

BUSCEMI

(v.o.)

...and I just knew... by the whispering and all, I just knew...this guy was giving up all the goods, spilling his guts, confessing the world. He must have told that stranger everything...

(rogues exchange looks)

(MORE)

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BUSCEMI (cont'd)

...cause I was moving real slow, took me almost three whole minutes to get from point A to B, and when I got there that guy was still spilling it...

The story comes to a temporary halt.

Buscemi's eyes are fixed on his empty mug. Short Bartender notices this and immediately grabs the mug and refills it with some brew, then slowly pushes it across the counter to Buscemi. Compliments of the house. Buscemi brings the soupy brew to his lips and freezes.

The room's eyes are on him. Buscemi studies the mug. Practically writes a book about it.

BUSCEMI

(finally)

Can I have a cleaner mug? This one's dirty.

Rogues exchange glances with Short Bartender, who is obviously insulted. I mean the balls on this guy, asking for a clean glass to Short Bartender's face.

SHORT BARTENDER

Man, fuck you, that's the cleanest one I got.

Buscemi's knows he's lying. Bartender grabs the beer and dumps it into another glass. Buscemi waits patiently, trying not to notice the cold hard stares of his waiting audience. Bartender slams the new mug down in front of Buscemi.

BUSCEMI

(drinks)

So anyway... I get right near this guy, don't ask me why I'm doing this. I just wanted to...

We see Buscemi cautiously walking up to the Stranger, who is crouched on the floor with his back to Buscemi.

BUSCEMI

...shake this guy's hand, I mean one gunfight later and the planet has 50 less world class turds to worry about. I mean, hallelujah.

Buscemi is right next to Stranger now, looking not unlike someone trying to muster up courage to ask for an autograph.

BUSCEMI

And then, without warning, without any hint or preview this guy whips around.... and sees me!

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The suspense is killing the Rogues.

BUSCEMI

And I... I see him!

SHORT BARTENDER

You saw his face?

BUSCEMI

His face... no.

(leans forward)

His eyes.

We see Buscemi's POV of the mostly visible face of the Stranger, the MARIACHI, who is looking deep into Buscemi's eyes, our eyes.

Mariachi releases the Bad Guy's throat, and rises slowly from the corpse strewn floor. He has his .45 fixed on Buscemi, and stands emotionless.

SHORT BARTENDER

(voice over)

And he didn't do a thing to ya?

BUSCEMI

What was there to do? I suggested that this was none of my business.

Buscemi shrugs his shoulders helplessly to Mariachi, as if to say his presence was an accident.

BUSCEMI

(voice over)

... and he must have agreed, because he turned his attention back to the guy on the floor, who right at this time...

We see the Bad Guy Mariachi extracted information from, reaching for a nearby gun.

BUSCEMI

(voice over)

...was reaching.

Low-angle spooky shot of the Mariachi TOWERING over the camera, a slow turning FAN over his head like some kind of HALO, as he aims his .45 into the camera and FIRES.

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BUSCEMI

(voice over)

...And the Stranger shot him.

All eyes are fixed on Buscemi, who searches deep into his mug for any further recollections.

SHORT BARTENDER

And the bartender?

Buscemi looks up at Short Bartender.

BUSCEMI

What?

SHORT BARTENDER

The bartender. Was he killed?

The silence is broken by Laughing Rogue's short burst of a laugh. But Short Bartender isn't laughing.

BUSCEMI

(slowly, recollecting)

The Stranger paid for his drink and left..

Buscemi takes a gulp of brew.

FLASHBACK

We see Stranger drop some coins in front of the nervous bartender, before stepping over the dead bodies to get to the door.

BAR

Short Bartender looks slightly cocky.

SHORT BARTENDER

(to one of the Rogues)

The bartender never gets killed.

The Rogue smiles.

Buscemi swallows his brew, then raises his finger...

BUSCEMI

BUT...

Short Bartender's smile fades...

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BUSCEMI
as the Stranger neared the door...

FLASHBACK

Mariachi strides to the door. The bartender raises a shotgun and levels it for aim. Mariachi SPINS around and EMPTIES his .45 into the bartender, each slug LIFTING the beermeister a few feet higher, until he's completely AIRBORNE, crashing into his shelves of souvenir bottles. Mariachi side-holsters the gun, and disappears out the door.

BAR

Buscemi shakes his head in sorrowful remembrance.

BUSCEMI
Oh, yea, man. The bartender got it worse than anyone.

He's finished with his beer, and slides the mug away. Another beer, in a cleaner mug at that, is slowly pushed in front of him.

SHORT BARTENDER
This one's on the house, if you can remember his face.

BUSCEMI
(nodding)
Thanks, but no thanks. I'm clearing on out of here boys...

Buscemi lets out a silent belch.

BUSCEMI
...because I think...

He pushes himself away from the bar.

BUSCEMI
...he's headed this way...

Short Bartender stares helplessly after Buscemi, who casually waltzes to the door, the camera following his journey.

BUSCEMI
Thanks boys, you all take care.

He spins out the door. The camera follows the gazes of the dumbstruck and silently brooding Rogues up to Short Bartender. He doesn't look happy at all. He looks worried.

CUT TO:

CREDITS SEQUENCE

BLACK SCREEN.

A GUITAR is strapped on. Close-up of TUNING KNOBS being tightened, and FINGERS loosening up. A HAND emerges from the darkness, strumming down over the TAUT STRINGS... and the playing begins.

The MARIACHI is clean cut, dressed to kill, and playing in his element. He's in a CLUB of some sort, a classy joint, and he plays fast and furious as the CREDITS roll.

The SONG he plays is elaborate and features his virtuoso guitar work and baritone voice. He has two other musicians, CAMPA and QUINO standing behind him. They're all playing guitars.

On Campa's shoulder is a SMALL MONKEY, dressed in his own little black and white mariachi OUTFIT with a sombrero riding on his back. He STRUMS his own LITTLE GUITAR and then prances around collecting tips.

The song they are playing is catchy and energetic, and one would get the idea that if it just got outside these walls onto a radio somewhere it would be a big hit. The girls SCREAM as his fingers deftly force the guitar strings to sing their beautiful melodies.

A FIGHT has broken out at the other end of the bar, a fight over a girl it seems, and someone has pulled a KNIFE. Mariachi sees this, and suddenly LEAPS atop the bar counter. As he plays the intricate patterns that are required at this point of the song, he walks across the bar, kicking a few glasses off now and again, making his way to the fight.

The KNIFE MAN has his back to Mariachi. Mariachi kneels down on the bar with his guitar neck just BEHIND the Knife Man's head. Mariachi completes a stunning and complex section of the song, accenting it by WHACKING the back of Knife Man's head. The nearby men and women pull the knife away, beat Knife Man to a pulp, then carry him out the bar.

The crowd CHEERS for the Mariachi as he walks back across the bar to where he came from, continuing the song, wooing the girls, and keeping his balance without missing a note. He's incredible.

Finally, after winning over several hundred female admirers, all to the agitation of their dates, he FINISHES the song in a grand display.

After such an outstanding performance, truly he deserves a standing ovation to end all ovations. He holds his guitar up high above his head after striking the final chord, and listens intently for the uproarious applause that should follow. He hears nothing...

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The Mariachi seems dumbfounded. No one moves. The place is completely dead. All eyes STARE at him. He stands there, like an idiot, waiting for the belated applause. It doesn't come.

The CREDITS continue over this.

Mariachi finally hears a sound: the lonely sound of a single person CLAPPING. The clap is slow and rhythmic, beginning faintly in the back of the room. The clap grows LOUDER as the person moves towards Mariachi, who strains to see that far into the darkness.

Who could it be? The Mariachi doesn't wait to find out, he nods his head, waves his hand, and says "Thank You" to his unseen friend.

The mystery person, a man in white, his rhythmic clapping now at full audibility, STEPS OUT of the darkness. Mariachi realizes the man isn't applauding him at all... but rather CLAPPING A PACK OF MARLBOROS AGAINST HIS HAND, trying to get a cigarette out. He frees one, puts it in his mouth, and continues walking towards Mariachi. The man is MOCO.

Moco passes his henchman, BIGOTON, who is staring at Mariachi. Moco STRIKES a match across Bigoton's chin, and lights up his cigarette.

Mariachi lowers his arm... The CREDITS are almost finished.

Someone places their HAND on Mariachi's back. Startled, he spins to see who it is.

DOMINO meets his gaze. He looks surprised to see her. She moves towards him for a kiss as the last of the CREDITS roll. As he nears her lips, a loud KNOCKING sound is heard offscreen. Mariachi hears it, and shifts his eyes to the direction of the sound. Domino is still waiting for her kiss, eyes closed. He turns his attention back to Domino. Their lips are nearly touching now. A kiss long overdue, between lovers of long ago.

The KNOCKING sound again. He finally turns around to see where it's coming from and we...

CUT TO:

INT. MARIACHI IN HOTEL BED - DAY

Mariachi wakes with a start, turning his head towards the door in a perfect MATCH CUT with the previous scene.

This is definitely not the Mariachi we saw in the CREDITS SEQUENCE. This Mariachi looks like he's seen a few years of hard mileage. He's not completely awake, yet we can see he's changed... music is no longer a priority or a source of happiness in his life. He's lost it.

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The darkness of the room adds to the mood, a few light shafts piercing the dirty hotel room around him illuminates his face.

The KNOCKING SOUND again.

He throws a glance to the chair where his DOG, a Pit Bull, sleeps soundly, peacefully, unbothered by the noise.

Mariachi crawls out of bed. He STUMBLES to the door, leaning against it. He takes a moment to regain his senses, catch his breath, and try to remember if he was expecting anyone today. He wasn't.

His .45 rises from out of frame, aimed at the door.

MARIACHI

(softly)

Who is it.

No answer. The wind. Finally...

DOOR

(o.s.)

Your pimp.

Mariachi opens the door a crack and shoves the gun outside.

DOOR

(o.s.)

Ouch!

Mariachi guides the person into the room, the gun barrel planted firmly on the man's temple. It's BUSCEMI

BUSCEMI

Don't you think you're being a little cautious?

Mariachi smiles and puts the gun under his pillow as he goes back to bed.

BUSCEMI

You know, one of these days, you're gonna lay down too hard on that thing and blow your brains out!

MARIACHI

(motioning to his dog)

Shhh....

Buscemi darts his head to the easy chair. The pit-bull is sleeping soundly.

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BUSCEMI
Sorry... didn't even see the thing.

MARIACHI
(head on pillow)
Tell me the news.

Buscemi waits a moment before saying anything. Should he tell the truth?
He spills it.

BUSCEMI
He's there.

Mariachi lifts his head off the pillow a bit. He didn't expect to hear this.

BUSCEMI
I mentioned his name... and they freaked.

Mariachi sits up. He's letting it sink in. Things take a bit longer to register this early in the afternoon.

MARIACHI
They reacted to Bucho's name?

BUSCEMI
(nods)
I tell you... he's there. One second they weren't listening to a word I was saying, soon as I mention him, boom. They couldn't hear enough. And suddenly they were interested in who you were. So I laid the story down nice and thick.

MARIACHI
How thick?

BUSCEMI
(confessing)
Pretty thick. Told them you were the biggest Mexican I'd ever seen.

Mariachi shakes his head in disbelief.

BUSCEMI
(confessing)
I was having trouble getting their attention. Okay I blew it a little out of proportion, but they bought it. They're shitting bricks, I promise you.

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CONTINUED:

MARIACHI

(thinking)

I guess I go in.

BUSCEMI

Yea. Well, personally... I think you should reconsider. There were some very dangerous people in there, and those were just Bucho's watchdogs. Believe me when I say, you're committing suicide on this one.

(shrugs)

Just let it go. This whole thing is just eating you up, anyway.

MARIACHI

(thinking)

I dreamt about her again.

Buscemi shrugs. He tried. He pulls out a paper wrapped wad of cash and tosses it to Mariachi.

BUSCEMI

They'll give you the rest after he's dead.

MARIACHI

(looking it over)

That's it?

BUSCEMI

The rest when he's dead, that's what they said.

MARIACHI

Why so little up front.

BUSCEMI

Because you're not gonna make it, that's why. That's what I'm trying to tell you. They know you're in over your head on this, so why throw away a lot of front money? I say when your employer doesn't even think you'll make it you should back out.

MARIACHI

It's something I was going to do anyway.

BUSCEMI

You're not going to make it..

Mariachi is studying his SCARRED HAND, a deep nasty scar across it. Healed, but not forgotten.

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CONTINUED:

MARIACHI

I never expected to...

BUSCEMI

Then what's the point?

Buscemi shrugs.

MARIACHI

I swore on her grave I'd never stop until it was over.

BUSCEMI

You go through with this, and it'll be over, believe me... it will be over real quick.

MARIACHI

(shrugs)

One way or another.

BUSCEMI

(slightly fed up)

Well, that's it for me, I'm out. You don't expect to live much longer? Fine. I do. Seriously, if you run into trouble on this and you need help? DONT CALL ME, okay? Don't call me. Call Campa and Quino, those guys are crazy, anyway.

Buscemi lets himself out the door. He points his finger and says one last thing before leaving.

BUSCEMI

You're in over your head, amigo.

Buscemi SLAMS the door. Mariachi hangs on that last thought.

His dog wakes up. Mariachi watches him yawn.

CUT TO:

INT. TARASCO BAR - DAY

This is the same bar from the opening scene, with the same Short Bartender, the same Rogues, in the same seats. They're not loyal, regular customers... They work here. Short Bartender is on the phone.

SHORT BARTENDER

Bucho. We just talked to the Oro Verde Bar in Saragosa. There was no shoot-out. Everything's normal over there. They did say there was a guy in

(MORE)

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SHORT BARTENDER (cont'd)
there telling the same bullshit story we heard last night. So, I guess we can just forget about it.

EXT. BUCHO'S RANCH - DAY

We see a man on a phone. Casually dressed, sitting outside, eating his lunch. We see only his backside. The camera is behind him. All we see is the back of his head until the end of the scene. This is BUCHO.

BUCHO

You're not going to forget about anything, you're going to keep your eyes open. We can't afford having anyone snooping around. We're being watched enough as it is.

SHORT BARTENDER

Of course we'll keep an eye out. I'm just saying we shouldn't stop operating just because...

BUCHO

Damn right you're not going to stop operating. We keep moving no matter what. Okay. Let me know if you hear anything.

Bucho hangs up the phone. He turns to RIGHT HAND, his number one henchman. Second in command of Bucho's world. We see Right Hand's face, but not Bucho. His back is to us.

BUCHO

I want a close lookout on all operations. If that means double and triple checking even our regular customers, we do that.

RIGHT HAND

(casual confidence)

I'll take care of it.

BUCHO

If somebody comes walking in that shouldn't, I want it handled without the place turning into a shooting gallery.

RIGHT HAND

I'll handle it...

BUCHO

I'm trying to show these Colombians that I can handle the extra volume, so we're being watched enough as it is. We haven't had any serious trouble from the authorities in a long time. So think about that... before you start shooting people.

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RIGHT HAND

You got it.

Right Hand is walking off to get started on his new orders.

BUCHO

You'd rather just shoot someone right?

Right Hand throws Bucho a sly smile. The camera dollies around. We can see Bucho's face now, and he looks just like Andy Garcia.

BUCHO

(quietly)

Wouldn't we all.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARIACHI ON THE HIGHWAY - DAY

Mariachi is walking down the road with his guitar in his hand, jacket over his shoulder, and Pit Bull at his side. They look great together.

MARIACHI

(voice over)

It's not easy being a vigilante. There's no money in it. Really keeps you broke. Being a hit man pays the bills. But you should never mix the two together. Never. And that's where I went wrong.

We've been hearing a truck approaching. Mariachi puts down his case and holds out his thumb.

NAVAJA'S TRUCK is barreling at Mariachi.

MARIACHI

(voice over)

Of course if it had been up to me, I'd have stuck to playing music for a living.

POV of the truck as it passes Mariachi.

MARIACHI

(voice over)

But it wasn't up to me.

Close-up of NAVAJAS, in the passenger seat, eyeing Mariachi through his side view mirror. He's Colombian.

Close-up of Mariachi's SPURRED BOOTS. A HUGE SCORPION walks up to his boot, begins to climb over it.

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CONTINUED:

The Pit bull watches as the scorpion meanders along the Mariachi's boot. He does nothing.

Fortunately, the scorpion changes it's mind. It climbs back down, spurning the spur as it reaches the ground and continues down the road.

Mariachi picks up his guitar case and continues his walk to town.

Pit-Bull finishes relieving himself against the sign, SANTA CECILIA - 10 MILES, then trots over to join the Mariachi:

MARIACHI

Had I known what I know now, I'd have never gotten out of bed this afternoon.

CUT TO:

EXT. IN THE TOWN - DAY

Wide Establishing Shot of the city of Santa Cecilia. The STREETS are busy, but not packed. Santa Cecilia is small and relatively quiet. The tourism isn't as heavy as in some of the other border towns.

EXT. ON A STREET NEAR DOWNTOWN - DAY

Navajas steps out of the truck, which drives away as he walks across street. He stops at a PAY PHONE, pulls several coins from his pocket and drops them in.

The camera decides to follow an OLD MAN who passes by Navajas.

The Old Man crosses the street. When he reaches the sidewalk, he passes a TOURIST buying fruit.

The camera stays on the fruit buying Tourist who then walks down the sidewalk and is accosted by a VENDOR, a nice old fellow selling necklaces, curios, jewelry, etc.

The Tourist tries to get away from the Vendor, when the camera decides to follow a BOY with a GUITAR strapped around his back, who skips between the Tourist and Vendor. We follow the Boy as he wanders towards the Tarasco Bar, pushing his way into the door.

Someone inside the bar grabs him and shoves him back outside. Smiling, he goes off to find new mischief, passing the sign: NO ENTRANCE BY ANYONE UNDER 21. Members and Non-Members Only.

The camera continues its dolly into the bar.

INT. TARASCO BAR - DAY

Short Bartender is doing a little cleaning. Not much. Just enough so his area isn't sticky.

A slightly tipsy, all American COLLEGE GIRL, gets up from one of the tables with her three friends. She walks up to the bar. Her friends huddle around her. Tourists.

GIRL

(to bartender)

Excuse me. But I used to work in a bar. So I know what it's like to wait on people and to bring them the drinks they ordered and all that. And I just wanted to bring to your attention that the service here needs immediate improvement.

Short Bartender is doing a good job of holding in his laughter. In fact he's doing a great job of looking almost ashamed.

SHORT BARTENDER

What do you mean?

GIRL

What do I mean?

The Rogues are getting some good smirks out of this. They're watching closely for Short Bartender's reaction to this nonsense.

GIRL

(looking about)

Our waiter... where is he? Don't tell me he's still in the bathroom.

Short Bartender glances at the bathroom door. He settles his eyes back on the girl.

Two men walk in almost unnoticed and sit at the bar. The main one is PICK-UP GUY. The man next to him is BUDDY. Bartender's eyes stay on the girl.

GIRL

Our waiter took our orders. Took a long time getting them. And then, he never came back to see if we wanted anything else. We did. Nor did he give us a bill. We've been waiting for a bill so we can get the hell out of here.

One of the Rogues pulls up a GUN from under the table and pantomimes shooting the girl for the bartender.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bartender quickly waves the suggestion away.

GIRL

We should have just... taken off, okay. But we didn't.

She puts down several crisp bills.

GIRL

That should be sufficient. Needless to say there won't be much of a tip.

SHORT BARTENDER

If you're not a little nicer to me, I'm not gonna ask you out.

She turns and leads her group of silent followers to the door. Just before she disappears forever, she turns back and says something under her breath, just loud enough so it can be heard:

GIRL

...and your beer tastes like piss.

SHORT BARTENDER

(with a smile)

We know.

The room laughs. Short Bartender nods his head in disgust over the abuse he took, and pantomimes a strangle hold. They all continue laughing.

SHORT BARTENDER

(laughing)

Bad service, bad beer. Don't people know not to come here?

PICK-UP GUY

Speaking of piss...

PICK-UP GUY and BUDDY are laughing too.

PICK-UP GUY

Give me a mug full of your finest.

They both hand a BUSINESS CARD to Short Bartender who looks them over before giving the cards to an ASSISTANT. The Assistant hurries over to the phone and punches in some numbers.

The Assistant is speaking into the phone quietly, reading the information off of the card. Buddy watches the assistant intently.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHORT BARTENDER
(serving them their beers)
This should only take a minute.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARIACHI ENTERS TOWN - DAY

A HORSE DRAWN CARRIAGE is taking it's time as it trots down the middle of the street, while a huge WHITE MACK TRUCK blasts it's horn from right behind him. Just then, from screen left...

...Mariachi enters the screen with his Pit Bull at his ankles. They cross in front of this... The dog immediately spots a GROUP OF CHILDREN hanging out on the corner with BUCKETS of WATER and WET RAGS. They're alternately running out into the street during red lights to wash car windows for a quarter.

Mariachi removes the dog's CHOKE COLLAR and TAG, and places them in his breast pocket.

The Pit Bull takes the cue, and runs across the street to join the Children, quenching his thirst in their bucket of water. The Children take to him right away, petting him and keeping him in good spirits. He's set.

Mariachi scopes the town. He sees the pleasant VENDOR with the curioso tray walking around the streets, seemingly content and glad to be alive. He acts like he's selling the cure to cancer, rather than the fake gold chains, bolo ties, and cheap earrings that adorn his tray.

Mariachi avoids him, and sits on the curb across the street from the TARASCO BAR. His guitar case sits beside him. He's checking the name of the bar with the one he has scribbled on a piece of paper in his wallet. He discards the paper, then reaches deeper into his wallet for a small PHOTOGRAPH.

Close-up of the picture of DOMINO. He studies the photograph. He tries to keep his mission clear in his head: what he's doing... and why. Confused, he's about to put the picture away when:

Close-up of a SMALL HAND reaching for his guitar case. Mariachi spins around, and SEIZES the person's wrist. Mariachi sees that it is a boy, NIÑO, about nine years old, sitting on the curb next to the case.

NIÑO
I wanted to see the guitar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIACHI
(releasing the Boy's wrist)
Do you play?

NIÑO
Yes...

Mariachi notices the Boy has a guitar strapped around his back.

NIÑO
(bringing out his guitar)
Do you?

Mariachi sits on that question a bit.

He sees a man wearing a STRAW HAT, an ugly patterned burlap sack of a shirt, driving a beat up GREEN CAR behind the bar. Straw Hat exits the car, and takes a BOX of what seems to be booze through a heavy BACK DOOR.

MARIACHI
A little bit.

NIÑO
Play something.

MARIACHI
Not right now.

NIÑO
This is my father's, but he doesn't play it anymore.

MARIACHI
(turns back to the Boy)
No?

NIÑO
There's not much work for a mariachi these days.
Now he just watches TV.

MARIACHI
(attention back to bar)
Sorry to hear it.

NIÑO
(shrugs)
He was never that good, anyway...

Mariachi smiles. The Boy is a pint-sized version of Mariachi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINO

Not as good as I'm going to be. Listen to this.

The Boy plucks out a familiar melody. The Mariachi keeps an eye on the bar, but listens to the Boy with great patience. Finally...

MARIACHI

Loosen your fingers a bit.

The Boy doesn't understand.

MARIACHI

Like this...

Mariachi wiggles his fingers and takes over the strumming while the Boy manages the fret. Mariachi's fingers DART over the strings in BLINDING SPEED and accuracy. The Boy is dumbstruck by the brief yet impressive display of true virtuosity.

MARIACHI

You know what I mean? Loosen them up.

NINO

How'd you do that?

He turns his attention back towards the bar. STRAW HAT exits the BACK DOOR empty handed and enters the FRONT DOOR of the bar.

MARIACHI

(smiles at Boy)

If you want to get faster... here's the secret. Practice this:

Mariachi puts the Boy's fingers on the strings and shows him how to do a TWO FINGER PICK. He then demonstrates the fret positioning. It's a simple concept.

EXT. GIRL ACROSS THE STREET - DAY

A young woman of about 26 years of age is walking down the walk on the other side of the street. She is watching the mariachi teach a boy guitar. She continues on her way.

EXT. MARIACHI ON SIDEWALK - DAY

Mariachi is explaining the lesson...

MARIACHI

Practice that everyday, all day. Next time I'll show you how to play a tune, using what you've learned. So practice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Boy gets up and walks away.

MARIACHI

Practice.

The Boy PRACTICES as he walks.

Mariachi turns his attention back to the bar. Straw Hat EXITS and drives away in the beat up old car.

The pleasant expression Mariachi had on his face when the Boy was here is gone now. He's deadly serious. Back to the mission at hand.

CUT TO:

INT. TARASCO BAR - DAY

Back at the bar, Pick-Up Guy is in the middle of a joke, while Short Bartender waits for verification.

PICK-UP GUY

This guy walks into a bar. Goes up to the bartender and says, "I bet you \$300 that I can piss in that mug, from over here... and not spill a drop." The bartender looks over at the mug, which is a good 10 feet away and says, "You're betting me that you can piss in that mug... way over there and not spill one drop?" Customer says, "That's right." The bartender, now he's thinking...this is a good deal. He asks the customer, "And if you spill even one drop you'll pay me three hundred dollars?" Customer says, "That's right." So the bartender says, "Okay. You're on."

The room is already laughing. An easy crowd. They must have been drinking beer all morning.

PICK-UP GUY

So the guy pulls out his thing, right... and starts pissing all over the room, all over the bar... misses the mug, doesn't even come close... but he pisses all over the bar, and even pisses on the bartender... Not one drop goes in the mug! So the bartender, he's laughing. He's laughing the whole time our guy's pissing all over the bar and says, "Man... you didn't even come close. You owe me \$300 bucks you fucking idiot." Our guy shakes his head slowly... smiles. "Yea, you're right. I owe you some money... Hold on just a second." He walks over to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PICK-UP GUY (cont'd)
some other characters playing pool and a few minutes later he comes back to the bartender and gladly gives the bartender his \$300 bucks. The bartender asks our guy what he's so happy about. Our guy says, "Well, see those characters playing pool over there? Well I bet each one of them \$500 bucks that I could piss all over your bar and piss all over you and you wouldn't even be mad... you'd be happy."

Uproarious laughter. Pick-Up Guy feels good.

The phone rings. The laughter dies a bit. Short Bartender grabs the phone. His eyes are fixed on Pick-Up Guy as he hears the news through the phone. Silence.

Short Bartender hangs up the phone and walks on over to Pick-Up Guy. He puts a hand under the counter.

SHORT BARTENDER

The verdict is in..

PICK-UP GUY

(shrugs)

What's the news, amigo?

Pick-up Guy takes a swig of his beer.

Bartender swings around a .45 with a SILENCER and blows away BUDDY. Note: The composition is a two shot of Pick-up Guy and Buddy, the bullet crosses in front of Pick-Up Guy and knocks Buddy off his chair.

Pick-Up Guy freezes. Still has a mouthful of beer in his puffed cheeks.

SHORT BARTENDER

(to Pick-Up Guy)

Don't worry, you checked out just fine.

Short Bartender lowers the gun. Everyone gets a good laugh. Even Pick-Up Guy gets a laugh, and manages to swallow his brew. He seems to be adjusting his shorts.

PICK-UP GUY

I knew I'd check out. I've done business with Bucho before.

Pick-Up Guy gets up, and casually glances over at Buddy being attended to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PICK-UP GUY

I just met this guy.

SHORT BARTENDER

(smiling)

Go on in, we'll take care of him.

Bartender motions towards the bathroom, and Pick-Up Guy nods a thank you and takes the cue. Buddy's body is dragged out back.

CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE BATHROOM - DAY

Pick-Up Guy enters the bathroom, and wipes the sweat from his face in a CLOUDY MIRROR before checking out the THREE STALLS. The last stall has an OUT OF ORDER sign on it. He opens the door, and steps up to what's left of the TOILET BOWL. It's almost completely covered with someone's lunch and yesterday's dinner.

Pick-up Guy grimaces at the overwhelming stench. Pick-Up Guy taps the FLUSHER with his foot. As the toilet flushes, the commode moves forward, and the WALL behind it moves with it. Not very much, but just enough to let someone slip in behind it. Pick-Up Guy looks around suspiciously before ducking into the crack as the wall closes behind him.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRIO OF MARIACHIS - DAY

A trio of mariachis is walking up the street. Mariachi sees this and stands.

Mariachi, eyes never leaving the Tarasco Bar, walks into a smaller bar right behind him.

INT. MARIACHI ENTERS ANOTHER BAR - DAY

Mariachi finds a seat.

BARTENDER

Beer?

MARIACHI

Soda pop.

Bartender gives him a second look over, before finding the soda.

INT. MARIACHI GROUP ENTERS THE BAR

The Trio of mariachis enter as the bartender laughs and invites them in. The camera is on Mariachi the whole time. We hear the bartender's laugh and SEE his hand waving, inviting in the Trio who walk past Mariachi in their sequined clothing. The camera is still on Mariachi, who passively glances over his shoulder at the fancy duds.

The bartender puts the drink down and Mariachi pays for it.

WE HEAR the offscreen Trio of mariachis asking other patrons if they want to buy a song. We hear someone request MALAGENA. They begin to play as Mariachi drinks his drink.

The camera closes in slowly on Mariachi, who is thinking about the girl the song reminds him of: Domino.

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK

Mariachi scenes with Domino. Him at the ranch, holding up her dead body... His hand getting shot by Moco. Mariachi at the grave site of Domino. The slab of a tombstone, if you look real close, looks like a domino. Faded dots and all.

BACK TO MARIACHI

Mariachi is starting to mouth the words of the song. He stands and walks over to join the band. He stands beside them singing. The camera pulls back and we see him standing alongside the trio. He glances over to them and realizes that they're not Mexican. They're JAPANESE. They smile at him as they sing their song. He looks at the back of their jackets and sees the embroidered name: LOS JAPONESES. He notices that the audience is captivated by the novelty act. He turns and exits the building.

EXT. MARIACHI ON THE SIDEWALK - DAY

The song MALAGENA is still playing. Mariachi stares at the Tarasco Bar. He takes out an unusual COMB (everything Mariachi owns is unusual).

He combs his hair as if on his way to a job interview. He fixes his jacket. He studies the comb. Obviously a gift from someone. Sentimental value firmly attached. Mariachi tosses the comb into the street. He doesn't expect to come out of this one alive, and he doesn't really seem to care. He picks up his guitar, casually does the SIGN OF THE CROSS, and strides across the street towards the Tarasco Bar in Slow Motion as the song continues towards it's crescendo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We see the determination rising in his face...

In a single take shot the camera is dollying back with the Mariachi in Slow Motion, and as the song hits and then holds the high note for what seems an eternity, the speed returns to normal as Mariachi strides to the bar, the high note holding as he pushes the bar door open.

CUT TO:

INT. TARASCO BAR - DAY

Mariachi pushes open the door, and as the door hits the wall, the high note ends. Cuts off, actually. All is silent.

He stands at the door for a lost moment, SCOPING out the room. Short Bartender sees him and notices the GUITAR CASE. He looks from the case to Mariachi's face several times. Mariachi begins his walk towards the bar.

The other Rogues notice the case, and follow Mariachi with their eyes as he walks past them to the counter.

SHORT BARTENDER

(suddenly)

What do you want?

Mariachi stops in his tracks. He's in the middle of the room. Short Bartender seems uneasy and overly cautious.

MARIACHI

I'm looking for work.

SHORT BARTENDER

There's no work here.

Bartender's suspicious eyes are rapidly darting between Mariachi and the guitar case he's carrying.

MARIACHI

Is there something to drink?

SHORT BARTENDER

Is there something in the case?

Beat. A verbal standoff.

MARIACHI

(shrugs)

My guitar. I'm a musician.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mariachi is laying the guitar case on the floor.

MARIACHI

Are you sure you don't want to hear me play
before you say there's no work?

Before Mariachi can open the first latch, he has TWO GUNS pointed at his head.

SHORT BARTENDER

Get away from that case! We just want to take a
look inside... If it's what you say it is you can drink
all you want.

MARIACHI

I told you. I'm a musician, and this is my guitar.

Mariachi UNSNAPS one of the latches.

SHORT BARTENDER

Leave it alone!
(to the others)
Get him away from that case!

Mariachi is violently jerked up into a standing position. He RAISES HIS HANDS... halfway.

ONE ROGUE has a gun on Mariachi's temple.

The OTHER ROGUE is OPENING the Guitar case. Short Bartender seems to be at his wits end.

MARIACHI

(to the Case Opener)
Careful with that. It's an heirloom.

SHORT BARTENDER

What is it?

MARIACHI

(to Short Bartender)
It's old.

The Case Opener UNSNAPS another latch.

ALL EYES are on the CASE...

Except for the Rogue with the gun to Mariachi's temple... He's staring coldly into Mariachi's eyes... studying him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHORT BARTENDER

Hurry it up!

The last latch UNSNAPS. The CASE LID is opening...

Mariachi's eyes quickly SEARCH the room.

Short Bartender is leaning over the bar... STRAINING to see...

The Case Opener turns to Short Bartender.

CASE OPENER

It's a guitar.

Short Bartender gets a clear view of the case. So do we.

It is a GUITAR.

The Rogue with the gun pointed at Mariachi's head looks to Short Bartender for further instructions. Short Bartender motions for him to let him go. Rogue LOWERS his gun, and begins to walk back to his seat...

Mariachi takes a deep, nerves calming breath as the FAKE GUITAR TOP silently begins to RISE up on it's HINGES, creaking... slowly revealing an arsenal of WEAPONRY beneath it. No one sees this as it happens.

SHORT BARTENDER

I'm sorry. But we've all heard stories of the bastard that runs around with a guitar case full of guns. We just had to be sure.

Mariachi takes another deep breath. We slide into slow motion.

The Case Opener turns to close the case. He SEES the weapons that are now magically before him.

CASE OPENER

It's HIM!!!

Mariachi raises his hands the FULL DISTANCE. The countdown begins...

The ROGUE that had a gun on Mariachi turns and sees the WEAPONS in the case. He throws Mariachi a cold, hard stare.

The Case Opener pushes the case far away from Mariachi.

The Short Bartender SEES the weapons...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHORT BARTENDER

Shoot him...

Mariachi's arms are still up.

The Rogue staring coldly at Mariachi REACHES for his gun...

A low, CLICK-RELEASE SOUND is audible as two .45's SHOOT UP from Mariachi's sleeves, and into his waiting HANDS. Mariachi levels his guns at Rogue...

ROGUE levels his gun at Mariachi...

Mariachi desperately FIRES both pistols...

Rogue's whole body is SNAPPING BACKWARDS, the heavy slugs dropping him to the floor with a loud CRASH

Mariachi is JUMPED by the Case Opener.

Mariachi quickly flips him to the ground. Keeping a firm grip on his shirt collar, he has a gun barrel shoved under Case Opener's throat.

Short Bartender DUCKS behind the counter.

Mariachi looks up to see....

ALL the other seated Rogues LEAPING TO THEIR FEET, pulling HEAVY ARTILLERY from under the table. The sight, played out in balletic slow motion, is a horrifying display by an impossible force for one man to go up against. There's just too many armed men. As they OPEN FIRE...

Mariachi jerks the Case Opener to his feet so quickly that the Case Opener is being SHOT by his OWN MEN as...

Mariachi LEAPS to his case, SLIDING across the floor with it to the other side of the counter where he takes cover.

Case Opener falls lifeless to the ground.

Some Rogues SHOOT everything in fear of turning out dead, while others start around the counter, on a search and destroy mission.

Short Bartender holds his ground, crouched so low he's practically kissing the floor.

CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE HIDDEN ROOM - DAY

Pick-Up Guy hears the GUNSHOTS, as do the two men PACKING a SUITCASE with MONEY. The walls are covered with all sorts of strange looking MILITARY WEAPONRY.

One of the money packagers, MONEY MAN #1 darts towards the SECRET WALL with an oversized ASSAULT WEAPON.

MONEY MAN #1
Don't let him out of your sight!

PICK-UP GUY
What the hell's going on?

Money Man #1 leaves through the secret door and waits in the bathroom for the right time to exit into the main bar room. He's in no hurry to join the fun.

MONEY MAN #2
(to Pick-Up Guy)
Friends of yours?

PICK-UP GUY
I swear I have no idea what's going on out there!

Money Man #2 FIRES a round into Pick-Up Guy's head.

CUT TO:

BAR ROOM GUN BRAWL

Mariachi BLASTS over the counter, then crouches and CRAWLS its parameter. He meets up with the search and destroy guys and he EXCHANGES GUNFIRE with them until they're dead.

Some Rogues are CLIMBING on the TABLES, trying to peer over the counter as they fire away, hoping to hit something.

Short Bartender crouches into a tighter ball. BROKEN BOTTLES and GLASS falling around him.

Mariachi rises from behind the counter and picks off the easy pigeons perched on the tables. His guns CLICK EMPTY as two men from under a table BOLT UP blasting. Mariachi DIVES into the bartenders pit, bullets licking his heels.

Short Bartender sees Mariachi fall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mariachi, his eyes on Short Bartender, shuffles to his feet and CHARGES at him.

Bartender ducks his head...

Mariachi uses Short Bartender as a step ladder, BOUNCING off of his back and LEAPING over the far side of the counter as BULLETS SPRAY at him from behind.

Mariachi hits the ground TUMBLING as the camera, glides across the floor along with him as he rolls to his destination:

THE GUITAR CASE

He drops in his EMPTY CLIPS and grabs two FRESH ONES.

Rising just as quickly, he RETURNS FIRE at the two guys... One of which ducks and crawls around the counter.

The other, whose gun is empty, LEAPS atop the counter and onto Mariachi.

Both CRASH to the ground.

Mariachi's feet catch the guy at the chest, and the weight brings his legs down to a springboard position, ready to launch. (see storyboard)

The Rogue tries to slice Mariachi's face with a BOOT KNIFE.

Mariachi CATAPULTS the Rogue into the air, Rogue's knife swipe barely missing Mariachi's face...

Rogue flies backwards through the air...

Mariachi rises from the ground, BLASTING heavy rounds at the AIRBORNE Rogue, who sports ten lethal bullet wounds before he even hits the ground.

Mariachi spins around to track the other Rogue, who is still crawling the perimeter of the counter, taking his time... in no hurry to die.

All is quiet. Mariachi uses his ears to survey the whereabouts of the Rogue.

Bartender is quiet. A few tinkles of glass can be heard on the other side of his counter.

Mariachi approximates the Rogue's whereabouts, and aims his gun at an overhead CEILING FAN. He BLASTS the ceiling around the fan, until the ceiling BREAKS APART from the impact of the bullets, DROPPING THE FAN onto the hiding Rogue, just as the Rogue was coming up for his last shot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The still-turning FAN BLADES beat the hell out of the Rogue as he crumbles to the floor. The blades POUND him all the way to the ground.

Mariachi rounds the counter... one gun aiming at the ground... the other held out in front of him as the camera follows low and close.

As the fan dies down it continues to PUMMEL the Bad Guy every few seconds.

Mariachi sees this and stops the fan with a few bullet hits to the motor.

The fan dies.

The bartender is imagining the worst. He has his eye on his GUN which is a few feet away, under the counter.

Before he can make a decision on what to do... a GUN BARREL lowers to his head.

MARIACHI

Get up.

He does.

MARIACHI

I'm sorry about all this, but I've heard stories of people that run drugs out of their bars...

Short Bartender backs against the counter.

MARIACHI

...for a man named -- Bucho?

Short Bartender swallows hard.

MARIACHI

And you're going to tell me where I can find him.

Short Bartender can't believe what's happening. It's as if the bullshit story Buscemi told was a premonition of things to come.

Mariachi has his BACK to the BATHROOM.

CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE BATHROOM - DAY

The man that left the hidden money room, Money Man #1, is leaning against the bathroom wall with his ear to the door. He has the oversized assault weapon near his sweaty face. He looks incompetent enough.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mariachi has his gun on Short Bartender who is about to write information down for Mariachi.

MARIACHI

...where he is, how many men he has around him,
phone numbers... and I want you to hurry up.

The door CREAKS, and Mariachi swings his gun towards the door.

The Money Man LEAPS out of the bathroom.

Mariachi runs along one side of the bar and the Money Man runs along the other side. They are blasting across the counter at each other as they run.

When a partition temporarily obscures them from each other's view, Mariachi dives atop the smooth surface of the counter, sliding towards the Money Man who is reaching the end of the counter.

Money Man SKIDS to a slow motion stop.

Mariachi SLIDES to a slow motion stop.

Each man ends up two feet away from each other with their guns pointed at their faces.

Money Man fires. Click! Empty.

Mariachi fires. Click! Just as empty.

The Bartender appears from behind Mariachi with his .45.

Mariachi sees him in time to roll off the counter as the Money Man is blown away. Bartender reacts at having shot his own man, then sees Mariachi's HAND gently pulling the guitar case into the shadows. Bartender backs away, holding his gun loosely in his sweaty hands. Tense.

Mariachi rises abruptly, his gun fixed on Short Bartender.

MARIACHI

You help me... and I won't kill you.

Short Bartender raises the gun and shoves it to his temple. Mariachi can't do anything from here.

MARIACHI

Wait...

Bango. Too late.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mariachi pounds the counter furiously. He never wins...

He surveys the roomful of corpses. Damn.

MARIACHI

(under his breath)

Now what...

He grabs a PAPER NAPKIN and scribbles onto it. He lays it on one of the DEAD Rogues in the middle of the room. He grabs his case and walks out.

CUT TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE BEHIND THE BAR - DAY

The HEAVY DOOR behind the bar opens. The MONEY MAN who shot the Pick-Up Guy sneaks out. His name is TAVO, and Tavo watches as Mariachi crosses the street.

Tavo FOLLOWS Mariachi at a safe distance.

Mariachi continues along at a BRISK PACE. He glances about. Looking for anyone that might be a nuisance.

Tavo keeps a safe distance for a few blocks, then closes the gap.

The YOUNG WOMAN we saw earlier is buying some fruit at a fruit stand. She takes her bag and walks on. This is CAROLINA.

Mariachi is walking RIGHT TOWARDS her. They are THREE BLOCKS away from each other.

Tavo is ONE BLOCK behind Mariachi. His eyes are SQUINTING, trying to find a break from the sunlight so he can get a good shot in.

Mariachi must think he's home free, because he's not glancing around anymore. His eyes are fixed on what at this distance appears to be a very beautiful young woman about TWO BLOCKS away and closing.

Tavo takes his GUN out from his shirt. He lets it hang at his side. His fingers dance across the grip... feeling the weight, adjusting his eyes to the sun...he tries to find the moment. He picks up his pace.

Mariachi sees the girl as his lost love DOMINO. She seems to be walking to him.

Carolina wonders why the man in a mariachi suit is looking at her so intently. She brushes her hair with her hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tavo pulls a second gun from behind his waist. He walks with the guns at his sides. His fingers tickle the triggers, waiting for the right moment. He starts to JOG.

Mariachi's eyes are fixed on the girl. His heart is pounding. Through his eyes he sees Domino.

Tavo RAISES HIS GUNS as he jogs. Both barrels are AIMED at Mariachi's back. Tavo doesn't want to chance firing at this distance. He must get as close as he can. We realize he is just as incompetent as the other money packager. That's probably why they work the bathroom.

The guns are BARRELING towards Mariachi at FULL SPEED. Tavo is trying to shake as little as possible. There's no going back.

Carolina's sees the man RUNNING at Mariachi, she SEES the guns and SCREAMS just as Mariachi SPINS and sees the barrels coming for his face.

Mariachi LEAPS atop Carolina and PULLS her to the ground, SHIELDING her with his body from the gun blasts that take a good size CHUNK OF FLESH from his upper left arm.

Tavo TRIPS over them and CRASHES to the ground.

Carolina turns her head in time to see Tavo AIMING a gun right at her. She sees Mariachi JUMP atop Tavo, PUSHING the gun downward.

The gun FIRES, and large pieces of CONCRETE burst up a foot away from Carolina's face.

Mariachi is struggling with the gunman, the barrels alternating between aiming at Mariachi and aiming at Tavo. Finally Mariachi delivers a devastating HEAD-BUTT that temporarily STUNS them both. Mariachi shoves the pistols under Tavo's chin, pulls the triggers, and ends it.

Mariachi staggers to his feet, then falls into Carolina's arms. Blood pours from his arm.

Carolina is looking around for someone that can help. Not on this street.

She puts Mariachi's arm over her and helps him walk away.

MARIACHI

(weakly)

I can't go to a hospital.

Mariachi grabs the case with his good arm and off they go.

Tavo's body is left baking on the hot sidewalk.

CUT TO:

EXT. NAVAJAS CHECKS OUT BAR - DAY

Navajas is under the awning of a CURIOSO SHOP. His gaze is fixed on the COMMOTION across the street at the Tarasco Bar. He sees a GROUP OF MEN guarding it from the outside. Another group of men enter the bar.

Navajas walks over to a public phone. He drops a few quarters in and calls.

CUT TO:

INT. TARASCO BAR - DAY

Low angle TRACKING SHOT of a pair of BOOTS making a beeline through the strewn bodies across the Tarasco Bar floor.

The booted feet we've been tracking stop at the BODY in the middle of the room. The body with the NOTE left on it. A hand enters the frame and picks up the note. Follow the hand up to a shot of a visibly upset BUCHO.

Right Hand Man comes up behind Bucho.

BUCHO

I said I didn't want this place to turn into a shooting gallery.

RIGHT HAND

All the money is still in the back. The Pick-Up is lying on the ground with a bullet in his head. Tavo must have shot him.

BUCHO

Where is Tavo?

RIGHT HAND

He's not back there.

HENCHMAN

(to Bucho)

Tavo is out in the street. About five blocks north.

BUCHO

Tell him to get his ass in here, I want to know what happened!

HENCHMAN

He's dead, boss.

Bucho shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Right Hand releases one of those ill timed, uncontrollable short bursts of a LAUGH.

BUCHO

(sternly)

What's so fucking funny?

As quickly as the laughing spell came, it disappears.

RIGHT HAND

(shaking it off)

I'm sorry. One of those stupid things that just struck me as funny, I guess.

BUCHO

(very serious)

It's not funny.

RIGHT HAND

(just as serious)

I know that.

(changing the subject)

Whoever it was didn't come for the money. It wasn't the cops...

Bucho reads the note, then hands it to Right Hand Man.

BUCHO

It was him.

Close-up of the handwritten note:

YOU'RE NEXT, BUCHO... Love, El Mariachi.

Right Hand doesn't get it.

BUCHO

(taking the note)

It's the crazy bastard that killed Mauricio a few years back. Some half-ass musician that carries a guitar case full of weapons. He goes from town to town asking questions, killing guys like... me. I don't need this. I really don't need this.

A few TEENAGERS, tourists, storm into the bar. They're laughing and playing, looking for good times and cheap booze. They SEE the carnage strewn about the bar, and they get real quiet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCHO

Can't you see we're FUCKING CLOSED!!

The teenagers back out slowly... eyes glued to the bodies. They are green faced by the time the door closes on them.

BUCHO

Somebody lock the door!

RIGHT HAND

There has to be something else to this. Why would he come here looking for you?

BUCHO

I set Mauricio up in a small town. Crazy, greedy bastard. He killed the musician's girlfriend and shot his hand off. Figure this musician, who already offed Mauricio, is either a revenge seeker,

(beat)

or... maybe he's got nothing better to do.

Wider shot of the corpse filled room. Right Hand surveys the room.

BUCHO

Switch our pick-ups over to La Azteca. We can't shut down, or the boys'll get suspicious.

RIGHT HAND

Bucho, we'll have to tell them about this.

BUCHO

Listen to me...

RIGHT HAND

(shaking his head)

I don't know, Bucho...

BUCHO

We gotta find this guy and get rid of him, quietly. And we've gotta do it before they hear about this, or that's it for us. We'll need everyone on the lookout for this guy.

RIGHT HAND

If he's left town?

BUCHO

He knows I'm here, now.

(crushes the NOTE)

He's not going anywhere.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bucho lets the crumpled NOTE fall from his hand. It falls perfectly into the gaping mouth of the corpse at Bucho's feet.

Two points.

CUT TO:

INT. CAROLINA'S BOOKSTORE - DAY

Extreme Close-up of a slab of ICE. Sunlight filters through it, illuminating the thin lines of BLOOD that drip down it.

Mariachi holds the jagged chunk of ice against his forehead. He's lying on a counter top, feeling the effects of the heavy pain killers.

MARIACHI

What the hell'd you give me?

CAROLINA

Pain killers. I'm operating.

MARIACHI

(groggily)

Where am I?

CAROLINA

Bookstore.

Carolina is digging deep into his arm using SHARP TWEEZERS and a blood soaked cloth.

CAROLINA

(clarifying)

Bookstore Café.

Mariachi is too groggy to notice Carolina is taking his arm apart looking for the slug.

MARIACHI

(eyes looking about)

Where is everybody?

Carolina motions to the door. Mariachi follows her gaze, and sees that the CLOSED sign is up.

CAROLINA

I closed early. So no one would come around. Actually... no one would be coming around here anyway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIACHI

(flinching)

Why's that?

CAROLINA

Nobody reads.

He grunts slightly from the digging. The pain killers are wearing off.

Mariachi looks around. The ceiling is high and the books climb all the way up to the ceiling. Unusual... bizarre. How is anyone supposed to get up there?

MARIACHI

Is it yours?

CAROLINA

It's mine. The building's mine, too. I've got an apartment upstairs, and a coffee shop through that door.

MARIACHI

Why a bookstore?

Thinks she's found the bullet. She pulls it up to the light to inspect it.

Nope. Chunk of meat. She tosses it aside and continues digging.

CAROLINA

This town never had a bookstore. Least not since I can remember.

Wipes her hands a little bit. She pours some more HOT WATER on the rag from a COFFEE POT.

CAROLINA

Parents passed away, left me this building and some money. Anyway... there were no bookstores.

(sarcastically)

So I get this bright idea...

MARIACHI

(really flinching)

Are you sure you know what you're doing?

She lifts up a MEDICAL BOOK turned to the page of the operation she's following.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROLINA
(Mocking tone)
Why a bookstore?

Mariachi lets it sink in.

Carolina works busily on his arm. She eyes the GUITAR CASE.

CAROLINA
You won't find work in this town.

MARIACHI
What?

She points to the case.

CAROLINA
Your guitar. No one hires musician's around here.

MARIACHI
I know.... I use it to pick up girls.

CAROLINA
Oh, really?

MARIACHI
yea.... OUCH!

CAROLINA
Sorry.

The camera is on his face, which is wincing in silent pain. Beads of SWEAT slide down his skin.

Carolina's hand enters the frame holding the pair of tweezers. Grasped firmly by the tweezers is a BLOODY SLUG.

CAROLINA
Check it out. This one had your name on it.

MARIACHI
You don't even know my name.

Carolina opens up a fresh pack of cigarettes and lights one up.

CAROLINA
You're right, I don't know your name.

She drags heavily on the cigarette.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIACHI

A smoker, huh?

CAROLINA

(releasing a huge puff)

Nope.

She shoves the cigarette deep into the bullet wound. Mariachi grits his teeth and screams internally. Sounds like a long grunt to us.

MARIACHI

(lets out deep, painful breath)

Thanks.

CAROLINA

The least I could do for you after saving my life...

She lifts a big threaded NEEDLE into frame.

CAROLINA

Let's stitch you up.

Mariachi looks deep into the slab of ice that **MELTS** in his bare hand. There is a bug frozen in it. We **HEAR** the needle pulling and tugging at his skin.

Mariachi is far away.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUCHO'S RANCH - DAY

One **OSTRICH** is chasing another around their run. Bucho is back at his ranch. He walks by his **HERD OF OSTRICHES** with Right Hand who is trying to talk to him.

RIGHT HAND

If it's the guitarist we're after he may not be alone.

BUCHO

What are you talking about.

RIGHT HAND

Some of the men have been telling me stories about this guy. He usually travels with a group of hired guns that cause a lot of damage. Maybe we should cut down on pick-ups until we quiet this down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCHO

We can handle this ourselves... You.. will handle this. I don't want anyone to even know we have a problem. What, do I gotta do everything myself?

RIGHT HAND

I'll handle it.

BUCHO

Damn right you'll handle it. And where's my car? Is it finished yet? How long do I gotta wait for this? I could have built the thing myself by now.

RIGHT HAND

I didn't like it so I sent it back to get a few things worked on.

BUCHO

You saw it and you didn't tell me?

RIGHT HAND

It needed work, I promise you, you wouldn't have been happy with it, it'll be better now.

BUCHO

I want my car... and I want that bastard taken care of.

RIGHT HAND

I'll take care of it.

A RANCH HAND passes a couple of Ostrich eggs to Bucho. They're huge.

BUCHO

See this. You need huevos like these to work for me. Or I have no use for you.

Right Hand walks off. Bucho hands the eggs back to the Ranch Hand.

BUCHO

Go make me an omelette.

CUT TO:

INT. MARIACHI AND BOY - DAY

Mariachi is checking out his stitch job.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIACHI

(voice over)

If I had just looked closer at her dress, I'd have noticed that she sews crooked. Too late now.

He looks out the window and sees the BOY practicing guitar as he crosses the street.

The kid almost gets hit by a truck in the process. Mariachi reaches out to warn him even though the kid can't hear him or see him. The truck skids to a stop and blasts its horn at the kid, who after the initial scare goes back to practicing. A car in the other lane screeches to a stop as well, again he is almost hit.

Mariachi tries to follow the kid by running to the other room, where he opens the window, looks around first, then calls out to the boy:

MARIACHI

Hey, kid! Get over here!

NIÑO

I've been practicing, listen to this.

MARIACHI

Get over here before you get run down! I'll teach you a song I just wrote.

Another CAR just misses the kid and hits a curb. Mariachi almost has a heart attack.

NIÑO

(crossing the street)

You wrote a song?

MARIACHI

I was inspired.

NIÑO

(smiling)

Carolina, huh? Hold on.

The Boy walks around the building and knocks on the front door. Carolina unlocks it and turns the Closed sign over so it reads OPEN from the outside.

CAROLINA

Hi, you're finally going to read some books, huh?

NIÑO

No, I'm finally going to get my guitar lesson.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mariachi enters the room.

CAROLINA
You're tutoring now?

MARIACHI
I'm a musician.

NIÑO
(cutting to the chase)
What's the song you were going to teach me?

MARIACHI
Play what I showed you.

The Boy plays the keys Mariachi taught him earlier. He's improved quite a bit. Carolina is watching them.

MARIACHI
Okay, but instead of this note, play these three here...

Mariachi simply points out the strings to play, and hums along...

MARIACHI
...and these four here. Practice those. It's the order that you play them that makes it the song. You've got to keep the order straight.

CAROLINA
What's going on?

MARIACHI
He asked me to help him, I've got to help him right?

NIÑO
Where does this go?

Mariachi shows him the fingerings.

MARIACHI
He's my little brother. Isn't that right manito?

NIÑO
That's right.

Mariachi shows him the last notes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIACHI

Don't forget those there. Good. Now practice that.
That's all.

NIÑO

When do I get the next lesson?

MARIACHI

After you've perfected that. And remember that's
my song. If anyone asks, you tell them I wrote it.

As the Boy walks to the door, it hits him.

NIÑO

And who do I say you are?

Mariachi gives it a few seconds of thought. Carolina looks at Mariachi.

MARIACHI

I'm your older brother, remember?

NIÑO

That's right... I forgot.

MARIACHI

Manito. Practice.

NIÑO

I'll practice, I'll practice...

Carolina can't help but smile. She locks the door and puts the CLOSED sign
on.

MARIACHI

I tell you what. I'll leave my jacket and my guitar
here. I'll go out, make a few calls, make my plans.
I'll come back for my things, and then I'll leave.

CAROLINA

Aren't you going to tell me what's going on?

Still charmed, she takes a key off of her key ring and hands it to him.

MARIACHI

No.

He leaves.

She locks the door. After he's long gone, she flips the closed sign over so it
reads OPEN from the outside. She's about to walk away, but she comes back
to take another glance out the window. She checks out the street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She flips the sign back over to CLOSED, and walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. TARASCO BAR - DAY

Some of Bucho's HENCHMEN are trying to clean the mess in the bar. They've cleared the bodies out already, and are now trying to clean up the pools of SPILLED BLOOD.

Close-up of a WET MOP slowly being lifted out of a bucket. The mop, dripping RED WATER, sashes along the floor. It doesn't soak up the blood so much as SMEAR it around. The mood is creepy.

The door creaks opens. The Henchmen turn to see who it is... and see the NAVAJAS standing at the entrance, staring at them like a lifeless statue.

Very creepy.

HENCHMAN

We're closed.

Navajas stands motionless. He looks dead.

HENCHMAN

Go on, get out of here.

A few long seconds pass. One henchman puts his mop down, but before he can do anything Navajas has turned and is walking out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARIACHI ENTERS THE TOWN CHURCH - DAY

Mariachi walks about the town without his jacket and his guitar. He walks up a GRAND STAIRCASE, grand considering the condition of the rest of the dilapidated town. And enters the CHURCH.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A PRIEST passes him by and goes into the CONFSSIONAL BOOTH. Mariachi decides to sit in one of the pews.

After a few moments of silent prayer, he approaches the confessional. He glances around, then goes in.

MARIACHI

Bless me father for I have just killed a bunch of drug dealers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUSCEMI

No shit. Here, I gotta little donation for you.

Through the confessional window Buscemi hands the Mariachi a bundle of money.

BUSCEMI

That's the rest of your advance. They were impressed with what you did at the Tarasco Bar.

MARIACHI

I was lucky. What makes them think I'll stay lucky.

BUSCEMI

They know you want him dead as much as they do. Look be happy, if nothing else think of it as a going away present. See you around, maybe.

Buscemi leaves the confessional. Mariachi sits there a bit, thinking.

When he decides to leave he is startled as he bumps into a MAN IN BLACK. Mariachi has his hand in his jacket before he realizes who it is, ready to check out with guns blazing. The Man in Black is a real priest.

PRIEST

I'm sorry, did you want confession?

Mariachi thinks.

MARIACHI

Yea, but I better wait a little while longer, because I'm on my way to do something not so good, and I'd have to come right back anyway...

PRIEST

Okay.

EXT. OUT ON THE STREET - DAY

Mariachi exits the church, stashing the money in his coat.

MARIACHI

(voice over)

I should have never taken money as a hitman for something I was going to do anyway as a vigilante. Screws up your loyalties.

He scopes out the town courtyard, and sees the man in the STRAW HAT who is walking briskly from the alley near the church.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mariachi squints his eyes, trying to remember where he saw this man before. We see a flashback of the scene earlier in the movie when Straw Hat entered the Tarasco Bar with a package and left empty handed. Mariachi decides to follow him.

Straw Hat is walking towards the same beat up GREEN CAR, which is parked about a block away.

Mariachi tries to stay back a bit so as not to make Straw Hat suspicious.

Straw Hat must have sensed him, because right away he stops in his tracks... turns... and STARES right at Mariachi.

Mariachi stops... and stares back.

Standoff.

Straw Hat turns and continues walking. He passes his beat up car, and puts his car keys back into his pocket.

Mariachi picks up speed. Straw Hat starts to run. Mariachi chases him.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

Straw Hat bolts around a corner, and barely avoids the GROUP OF CHILDREN who are sitting out on the ground, counting the money they're earning washing car windows.

Pit Bull is with them, and he throws a few cautionary barks at Straw Hat.

Straw Hat tumbles into oncoming traffic, BOUNCING over a few car hoods on his way to the other side of the street.

Mariachi turns the corner and LONG JUMPS the group of children, landing on a parked car, and from there falling butt backwards onto a moving vehicle which sends him crashing back to the sidewalk.

Mariachi picks himself up and bolts down the sidewalk after Straw Hat.

Pit Bull darts after them. The children are concerned with their new dog's welfare, and watch him as he bolts down the street after Mariachi and his prey.

Straw Hat is running down the sidewalk on the other side of the street.

Mariachi is keeping a close eye on him as he dodges pedestrians and street vendors.

NAVAJAS is on a pay phone when he sees Straw Hat TEAR past him. Navajas calls out to him by name:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ENFORCER
SARDINA!!!!

Straw Hat doesn't hear anything. He darts across another street.

Navajas spots Mariachi across the street barreling down the sidewalk, with Pit Bull hot on his heels, followed by a few of the children.

Navajas hangs up the phone and starts a half walk, half run after them.

Mariachi finally BREAKS across the street, dodging through the cars, trying not to get hit. He runs up the back of another car and DIVES for Straw Hat, barely MISSING grabbing his burlap sac of a shirt.

Mariachi crashes to the ground.

Straw Hat turns to see the defeated Mariachi and smiles triumphantly.

Out of nowhere Pit Bull bites Straw Hat's ass, sending him crashing and sliding into a parked car.

Pit Bull, panting, sits up on a step and takes a breather. When a Pit Bull pants, his tongue hangs down and his massive jaws are peeled back in what looks like a huge grin. Pit Bull sits and grins.

Mariachi lifts the man up by his shirt..

MARIACHI
(choking in heavy breaths)
You didn't have to make a big show out of it
asshole, I just wanted to ask you a couple of
questions...

A COP comes running over to the two men with his BATON drawn. He tries to break them up.

THE CHILDREN finally arrive, and they pet Pit Bull proudly. They start back to their corner, and Pit Bull follows them.

POV of Navajas walking briskly towards the commotion..

Close-up of a small, shiny THROWING KNIFE that he unsheaths from his belt. He SPINS it smoothly in his hand. An expert thrower, you can tell. He must play with these things all day.

POV of Navajas NEARING them. Mariachi can be seen ARGUING with the cop who seems to be threatening a bonk on the head with his baton. Mariachi still has Straw Hat by the collar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mariachi SEES Navajas as he THROWS his blade. It buries deep into the THROAT of Straw Hat.

Mariachi notices the blade jutting from Straw Hat's throat. The cop sees this too, and thinks Mariachi did it.

Mariachi LUNGES for Navajas, who THROWS ANOTHER KNIFE.

- The cop PULLS Mariachi back, thinking he's trying to escape.

Mariachi sees Navajas DISAPPEARING from view in the GATHERING CROWD. Now the cop has a GUN on Mariachi who PUNCHES the hell out of the cop and takes his gun away, using it to PISTOL WHIP him.

Mariachi takes off after Navajas, LEAPING atop a still car to track Navajas's direction. Navajas is walking briskly through the traffic before ducking into an ALLEYWAY.

Just then, the car Mariachi is standing on starts to drive away, taking him with it. Mariachi JUMPS to another moving vehicle going the opposite direction and from there jumps to the street running.

The Children are still petting the Pit Bull proudly as they walk.

Pit Bull sees Mariachi in pursuit once more, and he darts out to the curb, as if about to run off to help. He turns back and joins the children. He's done his good deed for the day.

Mariachi chases after Navajas, but he's lost him. Mariachi stalks the area of sidewalk near the alley where he last saw Navajas. He realizes he's still carrying the gun out in the open, so he pockets it.

He wipes his sweating brow with his hand. He moves his hand down his face in deep thought, spreading thick BLOOD across his skin.

He sees the blood dripping down his hand. He examines his arm, and follows the bloody trail up to the silver THROWING KNIFE that juts out of the back of his blood-soaked upper arm. He never even felt the thing.

The camera does a slow dolly as he surveys the streets one last time, before exiting the screen with the knife still jutting.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

With Mariachi gone, Carolina takes this opportunity to check out his guitar case. She takes his soiled jacket off of the case, and gently runs her fingers over the latches. She hears a NOISE behind her. Turns.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nothing.

She unsnaps each latch carefully, quietly. The last lid has a small lock built in. She takes a pin from her hair and picks the lock. Easy. She opens the lid slowly. She seems surprised by what she sees... It's a guitar.

She is about to close the case, but stops halfway. She opens the case again. The guitar looks funny in this light. She tries to pluck a string.

The string doesn't move.

The FAKE GUITAR TOP rises slowly, making a CREAKING SOUND that makes her heart race with fear. She sees the arsenal of weapons slowly being revealed...

A HAND darts out from behind her and grabs her arm. She wants to scream but doesn't.

Mariachi stares through her. She tries to pull away, but he TIGHTENS his grip.

MARIACHI

(calmly)

I appreciate what you did for me. But... you shouldn't be...

He motions to the mess she's making.

CAROLINA

I'm sorry. I wanted to find out what was going on. You told me you were a musician.

MARIACHI

I was a musician.

CAROLINA

There was shooting at a bar, earlier. The man who tried to kill you worked there.

Mariachi shrugs.

CAROLINA

What were you doing in the bar?

MARIACHI

Looking for someone who could lead me to Bucho.

CAROLINA

Who did you kill?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIACHI

Everyone, I think.

CAROLINA

That's why you didn't want to go to the hospital.

MARIACHI

It was mostly self defense.

CAROLINA

I believe you. If you're not a regular customer you're just asking for trouble.

MARIACHI

What do you know?

CAROLINA

I know that it's not a real bar, and that they were selling more than booze.

She sees his sleeve full of blood. She follows the trail of blood to the knife.

CAROLINA

What's all this?

MARIACHI

I found someone else who could have led me to Bucho, but..

Carolina rolls up her sleeves.

CAROLINA

You killed him too.

(sighing)

On the table.

Mariachi slowly climbs on the table.

MARIACHI

Please, no smoking this time.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUCHO GETS HIS CAR - DAY

Close-up of BUCHO walking up into frame, looking right into the camera.

Bucho's POV as the front gate opens, allowing his new BLACK LIMOUSINE to cruise into the courtyard. RIGHT HAND begins to point out the Limo's features to Bucho. Every detail.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RIGHT HAND

Bullet proof windows, sidings... hood. Mirrors. The ashtrays are bigger than the last ones.

The doors swing open and a Henchman demonstrates the GUN PORTS. Bucho nods approvingly, walking by the car, the camera dollying through the features.

BUCHO

What's the progress on our vigilante??

RIGHT HAND

(as if he's forgotten already)

We haven't found him yet...

BUCHO

No? Well he's finding us. One of our pick-ups was found with a knife in his throat. You know what I'm wondering?

Some of the Henchman take a cautious step backward.

BUCHO

(to the henchmen)

I'm wondering why the cops can find this guy, and you can't!

No one says a word.

BUCHO

Anyone want to tell me why?

No one jumps at the chance. He walks past a couple of Henchmen and slaps one of them on cue.

BUCHO

Because you're a bunch of

<SLAP>

idiots that's why! There are no more pick-ups scheduled today, except for the one on Juarez, stay away from there. The rest of the town is game! Take my car, and find him!

Right Hand looks over at Bucho's new black bulletproof Limo.

RIGHT HAND

I'll take my truck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCHO

Take my car, get out there... You see someone you don't know, kill him! He could be shooting up the town right now.

The SUN ROOF bursts open...

A Henchman pops out with a MACHINE GUN aimed at Bucho.

Bucho appears slightly alarmed by this. Caught off guard.

RIGHT HAND

Bullet proof glass on the sunroof, works as a shield for whoever is firing from on top.

The Henchman is smiling.

Bucho pulls out his pistol and BLASTS three rounds at the Henchman. The bullets DEFLECT off of the bullet proof glass. The Henchman jumps at the startling shots.

BUCHO

(Nodding approvingly)
It works. Now go and find him.

Right Hand shakes his head at the Henchman... who sinks slowly into the sunroof.

CUT TO:

INT. MARIACHI ON THE COUNTER - DAY

Close-up of the MEDICAL BOOK opened to a page on "Stitching an Open Wound." Drops of BLOOD fall onto the page.

Mariachi winces in silent pain.

Close-up of a NEEDLE and THREAD going to work on his arm.

Close-up of the book, as Carolina's hand enters the frame to brush the blood away from an instruction. She only succeeds in SMEARING the blood across the page.

CAROLINA

(glancing over his guitar case)
I know who you are. You're the guy that you always hear stories about.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIACHI

That's mostly what they are... stories.

CAROLINA

So you don't really go around killing drug dealers?

MARIACHI

The man I'm after is Bucho. I've taken out a few others, but they've all led up to him. He's the one.

We occasionally see the needle point work, but for the most part the camera stays on our couple.

CAROLINA

Expect to do this all by yourself?

MARIACHI

If things get rough, I'll call in a few friends of mine.

CAROLINA

I've heard stories about your friends, too. You're gonna need them. You can't just come in to a town and kill someone like Bucho. He's semi-legit, runs a ranch, has several properties. And he's got men all over the place.

MARIACHI

See, you do know a little bit.

CAROLINA

I have a problem with what goes on around here, yea. But killing people is not my idea of improving things. I'm not going to help you kill people.

Carolina sees the nasty SCAR across his left hand. She points to it, interested.

CAROLINA

What happened to you here?

Mariachi takes a break from his trance to gaze abstractly at his mangled hand.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

MAURICIO pulls out a 9mm automatic pistol and FIRES a single devastating shot.

Mariachi flinches grotesquely as his hand comes apart. Before we can really see the full effect we CUT...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BACK TO:

Mariachi pulling his hand away. He makes a fist.

MARIACHI

You don't want to know.

His eyes finally meet hers.

CAROLINA

Sure I do. I want to know why you would trade in your life as a musician to do what you're doing.

MARIACHI

Trade in my life? They took my life.

CAROLINA

Who?

MARIACHI

The kind of people I'm looking for. Bucho runs operations all over Northern Mexico. Including the one that was responsible for destroying my hand, and killing the woman I loved. If I could just take him out...

CAROLINA

You'd be satisfied? After him you'll want to go after the guy above him, then the guy above that one, and on and on. You should deal with getting on with your life, and let the cops handle it.

MARIACHI

Cops direct traffic.

CAROLINA

You're saying we don't have law and order around here...

MARIACHI

You have order, it just doesn't come from the law.

He's run out of things to say. He shuts off and goes back to his daydream.

CAROLINA

All done here.

She's tying up the thread.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROLINA
(waving the throwing knife)
I'll add this to your collection.

He sits up. Grunting at the pain.
While Carolina puts the knife back into the case, she finds an interesting gadget.

CAROLINA
(holding it up)
So what's this do?

Mariachi attaches a .45 automatic to the gadget, then straps the gadget to her forearm using the leather strap.

MARIACHI
(pointing his finger at her like a gun)
Put your hands up.

She raises her hands, as if surrendering.

MARIACHI
Now count to ten...

CAROLINA
What?

MARIACHI
Never mind. ...3, 4, 5, 6...

CAROLINA
Oh, count to ten...

We INTERCUT between her glancing between Mariachi and the .45 attached to the gadget.

Close-up of Mariachi counting. Close-up of the gadget...

MARIACHI
...7, 8...

CAROLINA
What's it going to do?

MARIACHI
9, 10...

Carolina SQUINTS her eyes a bit, then SCREAMS.

(CONTINUED)

63
CONTINUED:

CLICK! The gadget SNAPS, and the pistol FLIES up into her HAND. Time Release Pistol Popper. Carolina has her other hand over her mouth. She uncovers it when she realizes she's still intact.

Mariachi unceremoniously removes the gadget.

CAROLINA
(admiring it)
Que padre...

He lays the gadget and gun back in the case. If you look close you can see another .45 fitted into an identical gadget. The leather straps hang from both.

CAROLINA
Anything else interesting?

Mariachi pulls out a tiny guitar case. About 5 inches across. She takes it in her hands, admiring it.

CAROLINA
It's cute. Can I have it?

She opens it up. WEAPONS. Tiny weapons.

He takes the case, closes it gently and returns it to the daddy case. She smiles.

MARIACHI
Belongs to a friend of mine.

She looks him over.

CAROLINA
Soft hearted killer.... Why don't you stay?

Mariachi looks in her eyes. He's standing a little too close to her.

CAROLINA
(backing up a bit)
I mean, you're here enough as it is. You can take that room. But tomorrow, you go.

Mariachi straps the gadget to his wrist and attaches the pistol.

MARIACHI
First, I'm going back to the church. The man I followed may have dropped something off around there. Someone may come to pick it up, and I'll have a new lead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He grabs his jacket, and sees that Carolina has sewn the bullet hole shut and cleaned the blood off.

MARIACHI
You sewed it up. Thanks.

Carolina shrugs.

MARIACHI
Why are you helping me?

CAROLINA
I don't know.

Mariachi turns and leaves. The door closes and he's gone.

CAROLINA
(to herself)
Because I'm attracted to you, you're dangerous...
and I'm bored.

CUT TO:

EXT. NAVAJAS IN THE STREETS - DAY

Right Hand and his men cruise the city streets in the limo. At a stop light little kids try and clean the windshield. The driver waves them away. They try and clean it anyway. The driver turns on his wipers. The kids try and clean the windshield in between wipes.

RIGHT HAND
We should have taken my truck.

The other Henchmen feel out of place as well, except for one. He looks like he's having a good time.

They slow down near alleyways. The men that are searching on foot climb into the car after an area has been checked.

Navajas is at a pay phone, watching the car go by.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUCHO AT THE RANCH - DAY

Bucho gets a call. He picks up the phone.

BUCHO
Yea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bucho listens intently. He doesn't like what he hears.

BUCHO

Look... I didn't call about it sooner because...

Bucho's face flushes.

BUCHO

... I knew I could handle it. He's in town and he's got no place to go, we've got him.

Bucho doesn't like what he's hearing.

BUCHO

What do you mean you've sent someone in already? How long has he been here? Well who is he? Where is he?

(pause)

What are you talking about, we can handle this, someone like that's just gonna tear the place up, make a lot of noise!

(pause)

Look, I gotta know who he is or the wrong people will get hurt... Next time, I promise... I'll tell you about it sooner, but I knew we could handle <click>...

Bucho slams the phone down.

BUCHO

shit...

He thinks for a whole two seconds before snatching the phone back up. He stalls over the dialing...

BUCHO

(to his men)

What's the number to the phone in my car?

His men exchange glances.

BUCHO

(to all his men)

Hey, fuckheads! What's the number to the phone in my car!

No one seems to know. A few even say they don't know. A few others take small, smooth steps back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bucho pulls out a gun and FIRES a round into the air. He has the phone in his other hand, shaking it violently.

BUCHO
WHAT'S THE NUMBER TO THE PHONE IN MY
CAR!!!

CUT TO:

EXT. MARIACHI GOES TO CHURCH - DAY

Mariachi walks out on the street. He passes NAVAJAS, who is sitting in a horse drawn carriage.

Navajas watches Mariachi turn the corner, then starts after him.

Mariachi walks towards the church in the far distance at his usual pace. No need to feel rushed, no need to look anxious.

Navajas produces another shiny steel THROWING KNIFE. He effortlessly flips it around in his hands. It makes a sound as it CUTS through the air. TCHOOK TCHOOK. He picks up his pace, but doesn't get too close to be noticed... Mariachi knows what he looks like now.

Mariachi is picking up his speed. The church is a block away.

Navajas produces ANOTHER BLADE with his other hand. He slices the air with his knives alternately. TCHOOK TCHOOK.. TCHOOK TCHOOK. The sound is almost musical, the rhythm underscores the scene and heightens the tension.

The scene builds as the blades TCHOOK faster and the gap between the two men lessens. Navajas is about half a block away.

Mariachi's arms flail upward as a THUNK is heard, pushing him forward. Mariachi tries to strain his head around to see the shiny metal protruding from his back.

Navajas flings a few more knives at Mariachi. One plants in his leg, the other in his forearm as he tries to shield his face.

Navajas peels his shirt back, revealing a BELT FULL OF KNIVES.

Mariachi pulls himself up and tries to run into the alley.

Navajas throws four more knives in rapid succession at Mariachi. A few hit with audible THUNKS.

A POLICE CAR pulls up and the cop that caught Mariachi the first time steps out. He is bandaged about the head. He looks pissed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Navajas tosses a few knives his way. THUNK, THUNK. Down for the count.

Mariachi, with his arm raised, pulls the knife from his forearm as the .45 pops up from his sleeve and into his hand. In his other fist he's holding the removed knives in a group to form one big bloody weapon. He's ready to fight.

Navajas SEES Mariachi behind a TRASH CAN, but before he can throw his death blades, and before Mariachi can rush out for the attack...

...the BLACK LIMO pulls up behind NAVAJAS. The sunroof opens and a Henchman RISES up through the roof.

HENCHMAN

I don't know you..

Navajas spins and LAUNCHES the blades just as Henchman RIPS Navajas to shreds with accurate bullet hits to the chest.

The blade missiles plant deeply into the Henchman's face and neck. He grunts as he falls back down into the Limo, his grip locked tight on the trigger of his gun which lowers INTO the Limo.

The men inside YELL as bullets BOUNCE around inside the car.

Henchman's face and body are pummeled until his dead hand is FREED from the trigger.

A few Henchmen climb out with their guns pointed.

Navajas struggles to stand, blood spilling from his mouth. He tosses a couple of blades out and pegs the nearest Henchman.

The other Henchman shoots Navajas dead.

The Henchmen grab Navajas and the dead henchman, stuff them in the trunk and drive off. They never even see the Mariachi, who's stumbling off to the other side of the alley.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK AT THE RANCH - DAY

Bucho is on the phone. The camera is on him. We see no one else.

BUCHO

(quietly)

Hey. It's me again. About that guy you sent..

(pause)

I know, I just have one question. What's he look like?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCHO (cont'd)
(louder, fed up)
Just so we know, so my guys don't get confused!!!
(long pause)
I know your guy's good, but in case we find him...
accidently. I just want to cover all bases, alright?

Right Hand and his men are DRAGGING Navajas's body to the table.

BUCHO
Dark hair, dark skin. Yea, I figured that.. can you
give me a few more details. It will be worth our
while. Tattoo on right shoulder?

Bucho turns to see if he Navajas matches the description. The Henchmen lift up Navajas's sleeve. There's a TATTOO of the Colombian flag on his arm.

BUCHO
What else...
A necklace? A necklace, with two knives crossed...

The men open Navajas's shirt. They find a NECKLACE. They hold it up to inspect it. At the end are two CROSSED KNIVES.

BUCHO
Any weapons?

The men wait for the next description....

BUCHO
Throwing knives...

Right Hand is about to look for the knives, stops, then simply points to the corpse lying a few feet away.

Bucho turns to see the dead Henchman lying on the ground with the THROWING KNIVES buried in his head and neck.

BUCHO
(repeating slowly)
...and a pocket full of coins to call you from pay
phones with progress reports...

Right Hand pulls a handful of coins from Navajas's pocket and dumps them on the ground.

BUCHO
(scowling)
Okay, That should do it. Thanks.
(about to hang up)
Yea, we'll stay out of his way... Okay... Bye.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bucho hangs up.

BUCHO

FUCK!

Right Hand lets out another one of his ill-timed, short bursts of LAUGHTER. He shakes it off quickly, his eyes widen and blink like he got something in his eye.

Bucho PACES about. He KICKS the Henchman's dead body.

BUCHO

(to-Right Hand)

This is what I was talking about. We're being watched by our own guys. He's been here since this morning, checking up on us. Bastards sent him to check up on us.

Bucho KICKS Navajas' dead body.

BUCHO

The time to find this guy is now. Shoot first, check pockets later.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARIACHI AND THE BOY - DAY

Mariachi is against an alley wall, trying to catch his breath. He has makeshift tourniquets around his forearm and leg.

Mariachi sees the BOY out on the street with his guitar. He's not practicing. He's not doing anything. He's just standing there. Mariachi walks out back from the alley. He calls out to the Boy.

MARIACHI

Manito!

The Boy sees Mariachi and waves. He runs across the street. Mariachi looks both ways. No one is around.

MARIACHI

Why aren't you practicing? I told you: everyday, all day.

NINO

I can't play this guitar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIACHI

(beat)

What are you talking about?

NIÑO

It's my father's.

I have to go get mine. Come on.

MARIACHI

Where are you going?

NIÑO

I'm going to get mine.

MARIACHI

(looking about, checking his wounds)

I'll wait here.

NIÑO

It's right over there.

Niño points across the street, a block over.

MARIACHI

What's over there?

NIÑO

My guitar! Come on. I want to show you I've been practicing.

Niño stops in the middle of the street to turn around and call Mariachi.

NIÑO

Come on!

Mariachi runs out and grabs the kid just as the big white MACK TRUCK nearly bowls them over. Mariachi delivers the boy safely to the other side of the street.

The camera dollies with Mariachi as he follows Niño, looking cautiously from side to side, back to front. Mariachi is in obvious pain.

NIÑO

It's over there.

Mariachi is cautious. The camera tracks down the street, the two of them walking along the sidewalk.

Mariachi's POV of the Boy walking ahead of him. Mariachi stops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Boy continues to the corner and peers around it. Two Shot of the two of them standing there against the wall.

Close-up of Mariachi looking over his shoulder. He starts walking again.

Mariachi POV as he walks towards the Boy, and taps him on the shoulder.

MARIACHI

Where's the guitar?

Niño

Wait a minute. It's coming.

Niño is looking around the corner. He turns to Mariachi. Pushes him back a little bit.

Niño

Stay back there. No one else is supposed to be here.

Mariachi smells a rat. He slowly reaches into his coat and finds his gun.

Low Angle Shot of the Boy peering around the corner. Behind him we can see the GUN lowering to Mariachi's side.

A beat up old VOLKSWAGEN Bug is puttering at a distance.

Niño

(easy going)

See? Here it comes.

Extreme Close-Up of Mariachi carefully sneaking a PEAK around the corner.

The Volkswagen slows to a crawl as it NEARS the sidewalk. Niño walks out to the edge of the sidewalk and UNSTRAPS his guitar.

The window to the Volkswagen rolls down. An IDENTICAL GUITAR is SWITCHED with the Boy's guitar.

Niño

(to the man in the passenger seat)

Thanks.

The car IDLES as the guitar is checked. The car finally speeds off, TURNING at the corner where Mariachi is standing. They SLAM on the breaks when they see Mariachi standing behind the Boy.

Mariachi fingers the gun. Ready to start blasting if anyone breathes.

The car is idling. Wondering what to do...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NIÑO
(to Mariachi)
See? Now this one I can play.

Niño notices Mariachi's gun... then looks over to the stopped car.

Mariachi **THROWS** Niño around the corner to the ground. The car doors swing open and Mariachi does a running dive, **BLASTING** all the way.

The bullets **TEAR UP** the first man out the door, and Mariachi lands atop the car, sliding till his feet **KICK** the second man leaping out the other door.

Mariachi lands on him and **FIRES** a blast deep in his gut, using his body to help muffle the shot. Mariachi throws him down and checks the tiny car for anyone else. No one.

Mariachi grabs the switched guitar.

Niño is picking himself and **HIS GUITAR** off the ground. Mariachi grabs him by the arm and carries him back behind an alley.

EXT. IN THE ALLEY - DAY

Mariachi drops the kid on the ground, takes the switched guitar and **SMASHES** it against the wall.

Several **WHITE BAGS** fall to the ground.

Mariachi is furious. His face is hot, and he shakes with rage.

MARIACHI
(breathing hard)
This is your father's guitar?

Niño nods...

MARIACHI
Is this why he doesn't work anymore? Too busy making you carry this stuff for him?

NIÑO
All I have to do is carry my guitar around. They switch guitars every few weeks.

MARIACHI
What do you get out of it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NIÑO

(shrugs)

My father doesn't have to work. He sits home and watches TV.

MARIACHI

What else does he do?

NIÑO

That's it. They drop stuff off at the house for a while if it's a lot, or they switch guitars if it's only a little bit. My dad says they're getting smarter, so they hide it all over. Ladies with baby carriages, churches. Ask Carolina. She'll tell you. She does the same thing. She's richer than my dad.

The camera is on Mariachi. Rage.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARIACHI AND CAROLINA - DAY

Carolina has a PACKAGE in her arms and is unlocking the front door to the Bookstore. She turns and sees Mariachi striding at her with the face of a madman.

He GRABS Carolina gently but firmly. He PUSHES her towards the door. She is resisting his sudden aggressiveness.

The VENDOR is STANDING across the street. He is WATCHING CLOSELY at what is happening. That jolly old smile he usually sports is nowhere to be found. Right now, he's all business.

VENDOR'S P.O.V.

Mariachi forces Carolina inside.

The Vendor walks off. A large trailer truck approaches, finally passing in front of us, obscuring the Vendor from our view.

CUT TO:

INT. MARIACHI AND CAROLINA - DAY

Mariachi THROWS Carolina up against a wall, a .45 shoved firmly against her throat.

MARIACHI

What have you told him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROLINA

I haven't done anything wrong...

MARIACHI

(yelling)

You work for him, and I want to know what you've said!

CAROLINA

It's my job to look the other way, and I've done that. As far as I'm concerned... you don't exist.

Carolina's back is against the wall. Mariachi SPINS and throws a punch right off camera. From this angle all we can see is Mariachi punching away at what would seem to be Carolina.

We switch to a two shot and see that he is punching the bookcase right beside her face. She's flinching but realizes he means her no real harm.

MARIACHI

All this time, you're telling me, "let the cops handle it..." And all this time you've been protecting the bastard. I should kill both of you.

He PUSHES her away.

CAROLINA

If I wanted to protect him, I'd have told him you were here. I didn't.

MARIACHI

Well, you sure don't want him dead.

CAROLINA

I don't want anybody dead! I told you I don't think killing him is the answer. Besides, you'd be dead before you'd get a chance to do anything.

MARIACHI

(shaking his head furiously)

I'm going to stop this. I'm going to stop him.

CAROLINA

There are people above him with power you wouldn't believe. How far are you prepared to take this? I've tried to help you but you'd rather be dead than see what's really going on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIACHI

I see that you're no better than he is.

CAROLINA

Look... I don't sell the drugs, I don't move the drugs. All I do...

(she quiets down)

...is what I normally would do.

MARIACHI

(impatient)

Which is...

CAROLINA

I run a legitimate business. The bookstore, my bookstore.

(Mariachi laughs)

They only use this place as an occasional storage until someone else comes and picks up... whatever they're storing. So, as far as I'm concerned...that's all I'm doing is renting out space.

MARIACHI

Renting space, that's all you're doing... How much?

CAROLINA

The Back room.

MARIACHI

No... *How much* does he pay you.

CAROLINA

(beat)

\$150,000 a year. Cash.

Mariachi's face shifts. He stops what he's doing and lies defeated against the counter. How can he get people that make that kind of money for doing nothing to rally behind him?

Carolina sits down next to him. She lays her hand on top of his.

CAROLINA

I was trying to run this place, and it wasn't working out. I would have had to close it down. I didn't want to have to go to the United States, find work... cleaning houses. I didn't open this place just to see it fail.

Mariachi isn't listening anymore. He's thinking of Domino.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROLINA

One day someone walked in with a suitcase of money, and said, "take this, and just keep doing what you're doing. We'll leave some things in the back every once and a while, and they'll get picked up a few days later. You just go about your business... you won't be in any danger. For that you get \$150,000 a year cash."

Mariachi doesn't seem to be hearing anything. He's staring at his .45.

CAROLINA

Don't you get it? These guys want to blend in. They pay legitimate businesses to use them as fronts. At least I put the money to good use... This town never even had a bookstore until I built this place.

MARIACHI

And the customers are just lining up.

CAROLINA

(ruffled)

The money keeps this place open. Some of it, anyway. I stash the rest. Someday, if things start getting bad around here... I'll have the money to leave.

MARIACHI

You're not impressing me...

She quiets down.

CAROLINA

Once I said yes, I was a part of it. They're not going to let me quit. I could have refused it, but I wanted this place to succeed. I created my own problem and I'm dealing with it. Why don't you quit?

MARIACHI

I swore I wouldn't give up until it was over. I didn't create this problem. Men like Bucho did. But like you... I'm dealing with it.

Mariachi crouches to the floor. It's dark out. Carolina joins him on the floor. She places her hand on his.

CAROLINA

I can't convince you that there is some good to what I'm doing, and you'll never convince me that

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROLINA (cont'd)
what you're doing is good for anyone other than
yourself. So let's just drop it... okay?

Carolina finally notices the tourniquets and blood soaked clothes.

CAROLINA
God, you're a mess again.

Mariachi notices the package on the ground.

MARIACHI
(tired)
What's that?

CAROLINA
It was for you.

Mariachi lifts the package off the ground. It resonates. He lifts the guitar out of the plastic bag. His eyes are on Carolina. He finally drops his gaze to see the craftsmanship. It's good.

MARIACHI
Is it still for me?

CAROLINA
(smiles)
I didn't get you a case, since you already have one.

He strums it lightly. Good sounding, too.

CAROLINA
I hoped I could convince you to clear the guns out
of your case, and put this in it instead.

Mariachi looks up at her. She moves close to him.

CAROLINA
Play something...

She grabs his hand. The mood sweetens.

We see his mangled hand.

MARIACHI
I can't play anymore. My hand is all screwed up.

CAROLINA
So you improvise...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She straps on the guitar.

CAROLINA

Have you even tried? When things weren't going right, what would you do? You'd play wouldn't you. Now, when things don't go your way... you leave it all bottled up inside. What do you do to release it?

MARIACHI

Kill drug dealers.

She stares into his eyes. She straps on the guitar. Places her hand over his, leading it to the strings.

CAROLINA

Put your fingers here. I think this would be better therapy.

She starts to strum lightly with BOTH of their hands. Her other hand is taking care of the fret fingerings. She's starting off slow... soft.

Mariachi seems a bit surprised that she knows how to play.

MARIACHI

You play?

CAROLINA

A little bit.

She's playing competently enough. You can almost make out the melody.

MARIACHI

You're skipping notes.

He points to where the fingerings go, humming the notes as he shows her the correct placement.

Carolina again meets his gaze.

CAROLINA

You see? You're remembering already.

They're playing the song now. Her fingerings, and their strumming.

Mariachi begins to pick the strings, his fingers popping the taut strings in clear, clean flicks. They sound good. Mariachi is playing slowly. It's as if he's hearing the notes for the first time. They don't flow as easily as they used to, when they meant nothing...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The melody is elaborate... haunting. Carolina leans her head against his shoulder.

She kisses the side of his face. He's lost in thought. She kisses him again. He isn't responding. Again she kisses him. He looks up at her. They kiss. It's getting warm in here. They slowly drop out of frame. He strums an ending to the song as they disappear from the screen.

The screen is empty. The theatre audience is trying to peer over the frame line to see what's going on...

FADE OUT:

EXT. BUCHO SENDS MEN TO GET GIRL - SUNRISE

Bucho comes out of his hacienda. Right Hand and his men are gathered around.

RIGHT HAND

He's hiding out in the bookstore. It seems what's her name has been keeping our boy warm at night.

BUCHO

How do you know?

RIGHT HAND

We got a call from one of our pointmen.

BUCHO

(to his men)

I don't want a lot of noise over this. I want it done clean, I want it done neat... and I want it to look like an accident.

RIGHT HAND

How do we do that?

BUCHO

It's a bookstore... Burn it down.

CUT TO:

INT. CAROLINA'S BED - SUNRISE

Close on Carolina. Asleep. Peaceful.

The SOUND of someone humming a familiar tune...

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE BAD GUYS

The humming can still be heard on the soundtrack. We SEE Bucho's henchmen sneaking around the back.

BACK TO:

CAROLINA

Sleeping peacefully as Mariachi creeps into frame. He kisses her head, and sings softly:

MARIACHI

Estás son, las mañanitas,

He gently pulls the sheet back, just a bit... Exposing her clean, silky shoulder. He KISSES her skin.

MARIACHI

Que cantaba, el rey David...

He pulls the sheet back a bit more. Her soft back glows in the morning light. He KISSES the newly exposed area.

Carolina's eyes open.

MARIACHI

...inspiradas y bonitas te las cantamos...

More sheet lost, more beautiful back exposed. More wonderful KISSES.

Carolina is aware, yet silent. Playing possum.

MARIACHI

...a ti...

He RIPS the sheet completely off.

Carolina's FEET WHACK Mariachi upside the head. She laughs as Mariachi rolls off the bed, thudding heavily to the floor. Carolina peeks over the side of the bed to view her handywork: Mariachi is on the ground.

CAROLINA

You know. You'd be the man of my dreams if you didn't carry those guns around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIACHI
Maybe I'll give them up.

CAROLINA
(trying to hide her excitement)
Really?

A noise off screen on the balcony.

Mariachi puts his finger to his lips, BEGGING for silence.

CAROLINA
(laughing)
What's wrong?

Mariachi rises slowly, finger pressed firmly to his lips.

Carolina holds her hands up in defense, laughing. Expecting a double cross.

Mariachi has his senses tuned towards the WINDOW BEHIND HIM.
He spots his guitar case across the bed... yet he remains motionless.

CAROLINA
What is it?

MARIACHI
shhhhh.

The window CRASHES open with RAPID GUN FIRE.

Before Carolina can scream Mariachi is DIVING over the bed. Carolina holds the blanket up to shield her. She's defenseless in her bed.

The man at the window is now inside the room and AIMING a gun at Carolina.

Mariachi BOLTS up from behind the bed with the biggest FIREARM you've ever seen. Yes, the one from the Opening Scene. He really does have one of those.

One blast sends the Bad Guy SOMERSAULTING backwards by the impact, crashing him hard and twisted to the floor.

Mariachi spots a BACK-UP man climbing the balcony. Mariachi and the Back-Up guy both SHOOT at the SAME TIME.

In mid-air a puff of SMOKE accompanies the SPARKS and sound punch that takes place at the center point BETWEEN them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A small METAL OBJECT hits the floor.

Mariachi and the Bad Guy both notice it. Mariachi is first to SHOOT again. He hits Bad Guy square between the eyes, the impact sends him somersaulting over the balcony.

CAROLINA
Who the hell was that?

MARIACHI
We're getting out of here.

Half dazed, Carolina looks about the bed for something to wear.

CAROLINA
But...

More HENCHMEN are SURROUNDING the building.

MARIACHI
(whispering)
Let's go!

More HENCHMEN coming around the BACK

CAROLINA
(upset and disoriented)
I need to get dressed...

Mariachi grabs her by the arm and drags her off the bed.

ANGLE ON

Their running feet. Mariachi has his boots on and is ready to go... while Carolina's BARE FEET pitter patter across the floor. They stop at a MISMATCHED pair of SHOES and she slips them on as...

Mariachi grabs his jacket and THROWS it to her.

As she slips on the jacket, Mariachi picks up the SMALL OBJECT off the floor and inspects it as he walks towards her.

Close-up of the two bullets SMASHED TOGETHER forming a tiny sculpture.

MARIACHI
Two bullets smashed together in mid-air. Never
seen that before...

They barrel out the door as she buttons up. Jacket, panties, mismatched shoes. She's ready, record time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They BURST out the staircase door...

MARIACHI

You look lovely...

CAROLINA

Thank you... where are we going?

MARIACHI

Downstairs and out the front.

Down the stairs. They open the door where the main room of the bookstore is ENGULFED in flames.

CAROLINA

Oh Jesus...

Mariachi grabs her and pulls her back up the stairs. He looks about for an escape route. A mouse in a maze with starving cats on his tail.

Carolina PRIES her arm from his fatherly grip, and snatches a .45 from his belt. She grabs his arm and pulls HIM along.

CAROLINA

You're following me. We're going up...

A HENCHMAN appears at the top of the stairs. Mariachi SHOOTS him before the guy has a chance to take aim.

He falls, TUMBLING down the stairs.

Carolina gives him several sharp KICKS as he rolls past.

CAROLINA

(as she kicks)

Bastard! Bastard! Bastard!

As they climb up to the ROOF, Carolina looks over the side of the building and watches the flames lick the walls.

They run to the OPPOSITE side of the roof where they can jump to another building. He peers over the side. A few men WAITING down in the alley fire a few rounds up at him. He pulls away as the concrete near his face COUGHS up CHUNKS OF ROCK.

He puts his guitar case down and they both walk slowly back towards the middle of the roof. He glances over his shoulder to see if anyone is climbing up from the other side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They scope their surroundings, trying to think of another way out of this. There isn't any.

Mariachi and Carolina grab each other's arm and pull themselves close for a huge KISS as the camera slowly dollies in to a medium close-up.

They break apart from each other, exchanging desperate looks as Mariachi releases the empty clip from his gun.

A Shot at the ground level shows the empty clip hit the ground.

From this angle we see Carolina removing her mismatched shoes and putting them in her coat pockets.

Mariachi shoves a fresh clip into the gun and chambers a round as Carolina breathes heavily, knowing what they have to do.

Without warning they both break into a sprint towards the edge of the building.

Mariachi BLASTS ROUNDS over the side at the men below and...

Carolina LONG JUMPS the chasm between the two buildings, landing on a lower LEDGE of the ADJACENT BUILDING.

Mariachi THROWS the guitar case over to her. She guides it to a spot beside her and she chambers a round in pistol.

Mariachi hops up to the ledge and BALANCES himself, ready for his jump.

Carolina starts BLASTING at the men below.

TWO BAD GUYS have CLIMBED up the opposite side of the roof and start SHOOTING at Mariachi's back. Mariachi nearly falls over as the bullets lick his heels and take chunks of his ledge off all around him.

Mariachi shakily SWINGS around to RETURN FIRE, and almost falls over. His heels are TEETERING on the edge. He bends his knees and pulls a SECOND PISTOL out from his coat...

He CATAPULTS himself off the building BACKWARDS, both guns FIRING as he flies blindly to his destination. One of the Bad Guys on the roof is fatally HIT during this feat.

Carolina looks up and almost double takes at the sight of Mariachi JUMPING BACKWARDS towards her.

The men below take this opportunity to fire up at the Mariachi as he flies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She ROLLS out of his way. He SLAMS down hard next to her, GASPING for the wind that was just knocked out of him. She grabs hold of him to keep him from falling over the side.

The second Bad Guy THROWS himself over the chasm and lands on the ledge with his chest. He slides down, barely catching himself with BOTH HANDS. He DANGLES precariously over the side.

Both Mariachi and Carolina stare helplessly at the Bad Guy as he tries desperately to climb up. Blood seeps from the corners of his mouth. He looks genuinely TERRIFIED, and quite pathetic. This dilemma disturbs Mariachi and Carolina.

One of the Bad Guy's hands SLIPS, and we can tell Carolina is pondering saving the man. Mariachi is thinking the same thing.

Bad Guy brings his hand back up, only this time it has a GUN in it.

Our Heroes' expression changes from one of concern, to one of CONTEMPT. They KICK him off.

The camera FOLLOWS the Bad Guy all the way to the ground. As he hits the ground with a grotesque thud, the camera then pans up to reveal the other Henchmen, who are now prompted to fire several more shots at Mariachi and Carolina.

Mariachi takes two GRENADES from his case and pulls the pins. He holds them up for a few seconds then DROPS them over the side.

Two Henchmen below try to be slick, CATCHING the falling objects. By the time they realize what they've caught it's too late. BOOM.

Mariachi and Carolina climb up and LEAP to another building, then to yet another.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LIMO OUT ON THE STREETS - DAY

The Limo pulls up a few blocks from the bookstore and Bucho steps out. He watches the building BURN. His men come out and give a report.

EXT. MARIACHI AND CAROLINA ATOP A BUILDING - DAY

Close-up of Carolina watching the bookstore burn, as TEARS stream down her face. Mariachi has his arms around her. They are on a safe perch a few buildings away from Bucho.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIACHI

I'm sorry, Carolina...

Through her soaked eyes she sees Bucho. Surveying his handiwork.

CAROLINA

That's the bastard down there.

Mariachi sees the backside of Bucho.

MARIACHI

(moving quickly)

I can get a clean shot of him from here.

He grabs his case and finds a suitable weapon. He positions himself.

Bucho turns to get in his Limo. We get a good look of his face. So does Mariachi. Mariachi stops short.

Bucho pauses at the door of his car to say something to another Henchman. Mariachi is studying Bucho's face. Bucho **STRIKES** the Henchman and **POUNDS** the hood of the car. We can tell by this exchange that Bucho knows they escaped.

Mariachi lowers his gun. His eyes are wide, his expression is one of **EXTREME PAIN**. He grips his head tightly, as if trying to squeeze a migraine from his skull...

CAROLINA

What are you doing?

Mariachi, confused, puts the gun down and stares back at her.

CAROLINA

What are you doing? Shoot the bastard!

MARIACHI

(realizing what she's saying)

You didn't want me to kill anybody!

CAROLINA

My whole life was in there! He destroyed it. He did the same thing to you. We can do the same to him!

MARIACHI

If I shoot right now, they'll catch you. I don't care what happens to me, but I want you to get away safely.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROLINA -

I don't care what happens to me, he destroyed everything! Shoot the bastard!

Mariachi does not understand this woman, and it shows on his face.

She sees that Bucho is already in the Limo and driving away.

CAROLINA

Dammit he's getting away! You had the perfect chance!

MARIACHI

I can't go on shooting everybody, you said so yourself. And I'm starting to believe you.

CAROLINA

I don't care what I said before.

MARIACHI

I'm getting you out of here.

He pulls her away from the sight of her burning building.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL - DAY

Mariachi and Carolina in a room. Mariachi still seems to have the splitting headache. He looks ill.

MARIACHI

We leave town. Take some the money you've stashed and leave town.

CAROLINA

There is no stash money anymore.

MARIACHI

You said...

CAROLINA

It's gone. I had it hidden in the books on the top shelves of my bookstore.

Mariachi looks like he's lost all hope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROLINA

What about you. Any family?

MARIACHI

Parents gone.

CAROLINA

Siblings?

MARIACHI

I had a brother. Lost him to drugs, too.

Mariachi thinks. His head must be splitting in half because he tries to crush it.

CAROLINA

What about the friends you talked about?

MARIACHI

(thinking)

No, those guys are crazy. They'd shoot up half the town and Bucho would still get away.

He pulls out the wad of CASH Buscemi gave him.

MARIACHI

I've got this, but it doesn't count.

CAROLINA

Where'd you get that?

MARIACHI

It's an advance to kill Bucho. Paid by the family of a drug enforcement agent that Bucho had killed. Bucho was never taken to justice so they want him dead.

CAROLINA

I thought you were going after Bucho for personal reasons.

MARIACHI

I am. But since they were willing to pay me for something I was going to do anyway, I figured it wouldn't hurt to come out ahead for once. But if I don't go through with it, they're going to want this back.

CAROLINA

I don't think we've got a choice... Something has to be done. I can't go around wondering when they'll creep up behind me and put a bullet in my head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He finally stands and slowly walks over to the phone. He lifts the receiver and searches his mind for the number. He finds it and punches it in.

MARIACHI

Campa? Que onda, wey. Is Quino there? Where is he? How fast can the two of you get to Santa Cecilia? Good. Same thing as in Piedras. Yea. Hurry it up. No, I'll be looking for you.

(beat)

Because you're easy to spot.

The bullets shine in the light. Carolina is almost entranced.

MARIACHI

Thanks, Campa. And, hey...

The camera dollies in.

MARIACHI

...bring your guitars.

Carolina slowly looks up at Mariachi, who puts down the phone and turns to meet her gaze. The music froths, then boils over...

CUT TO:

EXT. BUCHO'S RANCH - DAY

Right Hand and his men are standing around like idiots. They've missed Mariachi again, and Bucho is... enraged? Is that a strong enough word?

BUCHO

It's one thing if you can't find someone running around a city, hiding any place he chooses. I can understand that. What I can't understand is how you can let him get AWAY WHEN YOU KNEW WHERE HE WAS!!!

Bucho's men are silent.

BUCHO

The time to get this guy is right now! What do I pay you for! Do I gotta do everything myself?

Right Hand is humiliated. His men shuffle nervously knowing this could be their last stand.

BUCHO

You take my car! You drive around... When you see someone you don't know... you shoot them! How hard is that?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: - -

Bucho grabs Right Hand's GUN from his belt. He SURVEYS the courtyard. One of the men that screwed up is standing at what he feels is a safe distance from Bucho. About 20 YARDS AWAY.

Bucho SINGLES him out.

BUCHO
(acting out the scenario)
LOOK! Who's that over there?!

Everyone looks at the 20 Yard Henchman.

BUCHO
I don't know him!

The 20 yard Henchman looks confused. Right Hand doesn't want to watch this.

BUCHO
I've never seen him before! Look! HE'S
CARRYING A GUN! That must be him!

Bucho raises his gun and FIRES at the 20 yard Henchman, the bullet taking part of his head to the ground. His lifeless body follows.

BUCHO
(to Right Hand)
How hard is that? It's that easy!

Bucho shoves the gun back behind Right Hand's belt.

A GROUP of Henchmen, stunned by the sudden loss of their comrade, are standing at what they think is a safe distance from Bucho at 30 yards.

BUCHO
(another scenario)
LOOK! Over there!! Buying a taco! I don't know
those guys!

Bucho grabs the gun back from Right Hand's belt.

The GROUP of Henchmen at 30 yards SPIN AROUND and LEAP over some BARRELS for cover.

Bucho FIRES at them. He misses.

BUCHO
(back to Right Hand)
How hard is that, hah?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bucho shoves the barrel against Right Hand's forehead.

BUCHO

BANG!

(lowers the gun)

Think you can handle that? Or do I gotta do everything myself?!

Right Hand takes the gun and replaces it behind his belt.

RIGHT HAND

I'll handle it. I'm taking my truck.

Right Hand storms towards his TRUCK, a big Monster Truck, almost like a tank, a Macho Mobile, a *real* man's vehicle.

BUCHO

You're taking my car! That's what we bought it for!

Right Hand turns around and walks back to the Limo. They all pack in.

BUCHO

Hurry Up!

As they're cruising away in the Limo, Bucho takes his pistol and FIRES at them. The bullet deflects off the trunk, and the Limo PICKS UP SPEED.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS ARRIVES IN TOWN - DAY

A passenger bus rides towards the camera, blurred almost beyond recognition by the heat waves that bakes the air. It pulls up to a beaten curb and chokes to a stop. A short skirted young woman walks down the sidewalk to the stopped bus. The camera walks beside her, never leaving her legs. From here we can see the bus door slide open allowing CAMPA to exit. He is dressed in a black mariachi SUIT, slightly worn, and carries a GUITAR CASE. He also has the MONKEY on his back, also dressed in his own little mariachi SUIT. Campa sees the woman. Love at first sight. He nods to her politely and she boards the bus. He searches the city for a path that will take him to the rendezvous point.

EXT. SHOESHINE CORNER - DAY

A man in another slightly worn mariachi suit rounds a corner occupied by a couple of scraggly KIDS with SHOE SHINE BOXES. They attack him with offers of a boot shine. He lays down his two small GUITAR CASES and props a boot onto the shine box. The other kid offers to do the other boot, so he stands on that one as well. This is QUINO.

INT. MARIACHI GETS DRESSED FOR THE SHOW - DAY

Mariachi, having just bathed, seems to be getting dressed for an important concert. The song he taught Niño plays softly, simply in his head. He doesn't expect to come out of this one alive. The song cross fades into...

EXT. NIÑO PLAYS THE GUITAR - DAY

Close-up of tennis shoed FEET walking along the sidewalk at a low angle. The camera CRANES upwards to reveal Niño practicing the song Mariachi taught him. He's gotten so good at it that he's adding his own variation to it. We can tell by the look on his face that he knows Mariachi will like it.

Note: The soundtrack builds around this little tune he's playing, incorporating it, eventually drowning it out in a suspense filled crescendo, before returning back down to the singular sound of the Boy's guitar. The music builds as the scene builds.

EXT. GUITAR FIGHTERS ARRIVE - DAY

Close-up of TIRES riding past the camera. We crane up to see the BLACK LIMO cruising the streets. Right Hand and his men are LOADING their weapons... surveying the sleepy town's landscape for any sign of Mariachi.

EXT. GUITAR FIGHTERS - DAY

Close-up of a pair of BOOTS walking steadily through a deserted street. The camera CRANES up to reveal CAMPA as he heads towards the rendezvous.

Close-up of the newly shined boots of QUINO as he searches for the others. Here on out, Campa and Quino will be referred to as the GUITAR FIGHTERS.

EXT. MARIACHI - DAY

Close-up of SPURRED BOOTS walking steadily down a different street. We CRANE up to reveal Mariachi. The camera dolly's ahead of him, giving us a low front angle view of him as he searches for his Guitar Fighters.

MONTAGE

Different ANGLES, of IMAGES building rhythmically with the swelling music: BOOTS... the LIMO... the Boy's TENNIS SHOES.... The GUITAR CASES... the Boy playing GUITAR.. The WEAPONS loading in the LIMO... everything drops to:

The little song on the guitar. The camera is tight on the GUITAR PLAYING, then cranes up, up, way up to show the ENTIRE STREET LAYOUT and the situation the Boy is walking into.

CONTINUED:

The two GUITAR FIGHTERS enter the frame and stop. From BEHIND the camera, Mariachi enters and dominates the FOREGROUND. The Guitar Fighters see him.

Mariachi takes his place beside them. The visual is comical, yet oddly threatening. They are all deadly serious.

The Limo turns the corner, and STOPS dead in it's tracks. The Guitar Fighters are waiting at the other end of the street.

All is quiet. The Limo idles. The Guitar Fighters are motionless. The rest of the street is empty.

INT. INSIDE THE LIMO - DAY

Right Hand and his Henchman have their eyes fixed on the THREE DARK STRANGERS.

HENCHMAN

I don't know those guys...

Right Hand grabs the phone. He PUNCHES in the number to Bucho's Ranch.

RIGHT HAND

Bring my Truck and everybody you can carry down to the corner of Sabinas and Moros. Bring MY Truck! Hurry up.

HENCHMAN

There's only three of them.

RIGHT HAND

Just in case...

THE BOY rounds the corner, the camera following behind him.

Mariachi hears the TUNE and turns to see where it's coming from.

The Boy, concentrating on his music, doesn't see the LIMO behind him... By the time he sees the Guitar Fighters..

The Limo's sunroof BURSTS OPEN, and Henchman BOLTS up with a MACHINE GUN.

Mariachi opens his case as it drops to the ground, grabbing the big gun as the two other Guitar Fighters take positions.

Slow motion of the Monkey diving off the shoulder of one Guitar Fighter as he takes cover behind the other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Sunroof Sniper OPENS FIRE.

Dirt KICKS up around the Guitar Fighters.
The Boy drops the guitar at the sound of the PIERCING BULLETS and takes cover.

Mariachi RETURNS FIRE as does...

GUITAR FIGHTER #1

This Guitar Fighter's GUITAR CASE is different. He doesn't have to open the lid. The FRONT PANEL on the guitar SLIDES open, exposing the BARREL. He simply aims the ENTIRE CASE. The barrel at the front of the case SPITS the bullets. He simply waves the guitar wherever he wants to shoot.

The Limo is RIDDLED with bullets from Machine Gun Guitar Fighter's case. All of which DEFLECT off the bullet proof surface. The Sunroof Sniper had DUCKED into the Limo during the return fire, but now he bolts up for another round as the Limo starts CRUISING forward.

GUITAR FIGHTER #2

The second Guitar Fighter steps up to the plate with HIS case. His guitar is different from the others as well. He simply SWINGS his case up to his shoulder. It seats comfortably there, and in this position the case looks like a ROCKET LAUNCHER. He adjusts the weight, squats and FIRES. A loud, clean MISSILE ejects from the front panel and EXPLODES across the hood of the Limo. This seems to cause some major dents and topical damage, if not shake up the men inside quite a bit.

The Sunroof Sniper is scared SHITLESS at this new development. The men inside are trying to get the phone to work. They are all shaken up.

The driver tries to restart the engine. The side doors BURST open and a few men SCRAMBLE out, running for cover among the buildings and parked cars.

The Machine Gun Guitar Fighter ANGLES his guitar case in the direction of the foot soldiers. He squeezes the HANDLE of his guitar and...

Close-up of the guitar, as the panel SLIDES open once more. The barrel rapidly spits bullets that TEAR UP the foot soldiers taking cover behind a car.

The Boy wants to get his guitar, which he had dropped earlier when running for cover. It is about ten feet away.

MISSILE GUITAR FIGHTER lowers his guitar case to normal carrying position.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Machine Gun Guitar Fighter gives a HAND SIGNAL directing Missile Guitar Fighter to aim a little lower this time...

The Limo ROARS to life.

The Boy is eyeing his guitar, waiting for the right moment to crawl to it.

With the case hanging at his side, Missile Guitar Fighter re-arms the launcher by SNAPPING the case downward. It makes a RELOADING sound. He then smoothly SWINGS the case up to his shoulder, then squats almost balletically. The move is beautiful to watch.

The Sunroof Sniper re-emerges as the Limo makes a hasty retreat. Sunroof Sniper OPENS FIRE. Too late.

Missile Guitar Fighter SQUEEZES the handle, launching another MISSILE that strikes at the Limo's underbelly, the EXPLOSION sends the LIMO somersaulting into the air towards an overhead camera, where it hangs for a moment before crashing down on it's hood, it's fiery weight CRUSHING the Sunroof Sniper still hanging out of the sunroof.

Missile Guitar Fighter turns away from the wreckage chuckling... He stops when he sees Right Hand's TRUCK filled with armed HENCHMEN that Right Hand called earlier, speeding at them from BEHIND...

The Boy crawls to his guitar.

The Henchmen TUMBLE out of the truck and SCATTER in different directions, taking cover, and OPENING FIRE on the Guitar Fighters.

Mariachi DIVES for cover behind his guitar.

Bullets DEFLECT off of the bullet proof lid on Mariachi's open case.

Mariachi jumps back into the tight group formation with fresh clips and RETURNS FIRE on the Henchmen.

Machine Gun Guitar Fighter SPRAYS the area with bullets. Many men go down in his bullet sweep... while others are killed by the cars that EXPLODE when Missile Guitar Fighter blasts a MISSILE their way.

Missile Guitar Fighter RE-ARMS his case, SWINGS it to his shoulder and FIRES again.

One Henchman sees the guitar aimed in his direction and turns to run.

POV of the MISSILE as it BURSTS out of the case, SPINNING wildly towards the RUNNING Henchman, finally BLASTING the Henchman and sending him FLYING up to a second balcony. The BLAST takes a whole side of the building with it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Right Hand STAGGERS out of the Limo wreckage as the camera dollies back with him at a dutch angle... His head BLEEDS as he trips over himself in disorientation.

One wild Henchman CHARGES atop a BURNING CAR and BLASTS Missile Guitar Fighter.

Missile Guitar Fighter SNAPS backward with the IMPACT of the bullets punching through his body. As he DROPS backwards to the ground, his case FIRES, sending a MISSILE straight up INTO THE AIR.

Machine Gun Guitar Fighter shows a brief moment of remorse towards his fallen comrade, maybe half a second's worth, then RETURNS FIRE to the man aboard the flaming car, who is RIPPED TO SHREDS before falling flat onto the metal bonfire.

Mariachi presses his back against Machine Gun Guitar Fighter's and they walk together in the tight two man formation, one covering the other.

MISSILE P.O.V.

The CAMERA is the MISSILE as it falls back to the earth, straight down towards the dying MISSILE GUITAR FIGHTER who is laying spread eagled in the dirt, staring STRAIGHT UP into the oncoming MISSILE.

The camera is now on Machine Gun Guitar Fighter who strides determinedly towards the HIDING Henchman AS Missile Guitar Fighter EXPLODES in the background (see storyboard). Machine Gun Guitar Fighter hardly flinches...

Mariachi is turning his attention to the spot where he last saw Niño.

Machine Gun Guitar Fighter is doing a good job of almost SINGLE-HANDEDLY taking out the Henchmen that are HIDING behind the cars.

Mariachi's eyes DART about... He finally sees the Boy lying motionless on the sidewalk across the street, partly obscured by a TELEPHONE POLE. His BLOODY HAND is outstretched to the GUITAR lying beside him. The fire spread around by the explosion is nearing him.

Mariachi RUNS out halfway across the street. He stops in his tracks, pondering for the moment if he should abandon the Guitar Fighter to help the boy or stand his ground and back him up.

Guitar Fighter stares at him as if this shouldn't be an issue. 'Stand you're ground' his eyes seem to say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mariachi runs for the boy.

Bullets FLY as Machine Gun Guitar Fighter stands his own ground.

Mariachi huddles against the bleeding child, whose face is riddled with confusion and pain.

Machine Gun Guitar Fighter RIPS some more Bad Guys to SHREDS with his unrelenting GUNFIRE.

Several Henchmen RETURN DEADLY FIRE that PUNCHES through Machine Gun Guitar Fighter... sending him CRASHING to his knees. But before he goes...

He TILTS his Guitar Case up and BLASTS a few more Bad Guys.

A SHARPSHOOTER fires the DEATH BLOW to Guitar Fighter's head from 50 yards away. Machine Gun Guitar Fighter dies where he kneels, with his CASE still gripped tightly in his hand..

The Monkey climbs atop his dying master. The bleeding Guitar Fighter breathe his last breath. The Monkey sees the Henchmen heading towards Mariachi.

Mariachi lifts the kid in his arms and tries to carry him away.

The Monkey climbs into Mariachi's guitar case and finds his own little guitar case that Mariachi showed Carolina earlier.

The last few Henchman slowly creep out from hiding, out from the burning wreckage of parked cars, and proceed to find the Last Mariachi.

The Monkey opens his guitar case and finds a small PISTOL, then darts down the street towards the Henchman in front of the group.

The Henchman sees the tiny creature darting towards him and before he can react the Monkey leaps to the man's chest and grabs his collar. With the other hand he shoves his tiny pistol into the Henchman's face and fires.

The tiny blast blinds the Henchman, who falls back claspng his bloody face. The other Henchmen are stunned as the Monkey leaps under a car and scurries for an opening.

The Henchmen look about for the Monkey who may pop out at any time.

The Monkey pops up onto the hood of the car right behind a Henchman who turns in time to see the little gun barrel leveled at his face. The Monkey blasts him and sends him screaming into the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Someone tries to sneak up on the Monkey whose other pistol, in his left hand, darts out and blasts the man in the face. The Monkey aims both pistols at the man and fires repeatedly until the Henchman falls.

More Henchmen come up and the Monkey surrenders... he holds his hands up and then levels a gun barrel at his own head for a quick suicide, obviously to avoid being captured and taken in for questioning. The Henchmen hold their fire and watch intently for the Monkey to do himself in.

Before an eye can be batted the Monkey re-aims his guns at the Henchmen and blows them away...

CLOSE SHOT of MISMATCHED SHOES darting from behind a building and climbing into Right Hand's Truck. CAROLINA starts it up and peels back with it.

The Henchmen turn to see who of their men is starting a retreat.

The Truck kicks forward, accelerating quickly and charging for the Henchmen left on foot.

They try and scramble out of Carolina's way, but she's POUNDING at the accelerator... on her way to hell.

She smashes most of them against the parked car where the Monkey made his stand. The few Henchmen left are shot down by Mariachi.

The truck SKIDS to a stop near Mariachi and the boy.

Mariachi CARRIES the wounded Boy and lays him in the bed of the truck. Carolina slips to the back and Mariachi climbs up front.

We can see an ARMED MAN, out of focus and in the background, STAGGER out from the sidewalk towards the truck.

Carolina SCREAMS at the sight of Right Hand, who can barely hold himself up, firing shots at Carolina.

Mariachi GUNS the truck around to face Right Hand.

Right Hand's empty gun clicks uselessly at Mariachi.

Mariachi pounds the accelerator, running over Right Hand whose last sight is of his beloved truck speeding towards him.

As Mariachi continues on to the clinic across town, we see the Monkey climb up to his dead master's chest, where he sits, and rests.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

MONTAGE of the hospital hooking up the Boy for a last attempt rescue. NEEDLES, MONITORS, and other CRUDE LOOKING MACHINERY are brought in.

Mariachi TEARS through the hospital, trying to build up the hate necessary to go through with this final step.

Carolina is silent.

Mariachi is wired like nothing we've yet seen.

Mariachi STORMS into the operating room. The nurses try and get him to leave. He sees the Boy dying on the table as they huddle around him.

He marches down the hall. He SEES images from his past. The pain, the death, the loss. The senseless killing. The monster he has become in order to destroy a monster. He knows what he has to do, and it scares him. He storms past Carolina.

Carolina watches in disbelief as he bursts out of the hospital. She bolts to her feet and RUNS after him.

CUT TO:

SHOWDOWN

EXT. BUCHO'S RANCH - DAY

Close-up of Bucho's phone as it RINGS. The camera pulls back slowly, to reveal Bucho SITTING next to it. Not answering it. Bucho is surrounded by the few men he has left. They all have their guns ready for whatever should happen.

HENCHMAN

Maybe you should answer it.

BUCHO

Maybe you should do your job and shut the fuck up.

HENCHMAN

(long pause)

I figure it could be Right Hand.

BUCHO

If Right Hand has something to tell me he'll come here. Otherwise it's safe to assume that he's dead, and that someone is simply calling to tell me... that I've screwed up the entire operation.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCHO (cont'd)

(voice rising)

To tell me that not only could I not handle the business, but that I managed to destroy half the town, completely blowing the use of this and all surrounding towns which I controlled...

(anger at top level)

It's safe to assume that it's someone calling to tell me that there are a hundred hit men headed my way, to show me what happens when you fuck up!

Bucho is out of his seat now, and the Henchman has backed away considerably...

Bucho spins around and SHOOTS THE PHONE.

...which stops ringing.

CUT TO:

EXT. ON THE ROAD - DAY

Mariachi and Carolina barrel down the dusty road to BUCHO'S RANCH.

CAROLINA

All I know is that it's two miles north of here. I don't know the entrances, or best way to get in. You must realize... that he has contacts in these houses all along here. He knows we're coming.

MARIACHI

I know.

CAROLINA

What's the plan?

MARIACHI

No plan. We ride in and say hello.

CAROLINA

So he's just gonna let you walk in there?

MARIACHI

He will.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUCHO'S RANCH - DAY

One of the Henchman walks towards Bucho, but is sure not to get too close.

HENCHMAN

Right Hand's truck is headed towards the north entrance.

Bucho finishes a drink.

BUCHO

Then let's go to the north entrance.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE RANCH - DAY

Mariachi is checking the place out. There seems to be only one way in from this road.

MARIACHI

Drive up to the door, and I'll get out. If things go bad, I want you to get out of here. Don't wait.

CAROLINA

Yea, well... I'm going with you.

Mariachi and Carolina step out of the truck and walk towards the gate. He has his guitar case. Other than that, they're unarmed.

As they near the gate, it opens. Mariachi and Carolina step inside the fortress slowly.

Bucho is standing there waiting for them. He has his gun aimed at them. So do his men.

Mariachi continues inside. Carolina holds back just a bit. She's having second thoughts about this.

Bucho is studying Mariachi, not believing his eyes.

Carolina picks up on the weirdness of the moment. Mariachi walks in like it's any day of the week, placing his guitar case on the ground. He stands beside it... keeping his eyes on Bucho:

BUCHO

Manito?

Mariachi is emotionless. Bucho is in disbelief.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCHO

What the hell are you doing here?

Mariachi shrugs defiantly.

BUCHO

(thrown off guard)

You're the one trying to kill me? All this time... I think I'm looking for the devil himself...

(beat)

And all this time... it was my own fucking brother. Are you out of your sick fucking mind?

MARIACHI

I didn't know it was you, Cesar. I only found out this morning.

Cesar (Bucho) is dumbfounded.

Realization finally hits Carolina, who closes her eyes with regret.

CESAR

You were the last person I thought would come through that door.

Bucho extends his arms, walks up to Mariachi, and embraces him. The other Henchmen are wondering what the hell is going on. They close in a little bit.

Mariachi's eyes are fixed on Carolina. Bucho breaks the embrace. He holds Mariachi's face in his gun filled hands.

CESAR

You know how much trouble you've caused me?

He presses a GUN BARREL against Mariachi's cheek.

CESAR

Let me tell you in non-technical terms. You've fucked me. The men I work for, the men that run this entire countryside, put their faith in me when I told them I could handle this operation. And now, because of you... they're probably sending a hit squad over to do me in.

Mariachi doesn't flinch. His eyes are on Carolina. Carolina is distraught. She cries silently for Mariachi. She knows she pushed him to this.

CESAR

I oughta kill you right now...You disgraced me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIACHI

You disgraced us.

CESAR

Why? Because I was the only one that wanted to move up in the world?

MARIACHI

We always knew you were up to no good Cesar. ...Never thought you'd go this far.

CESAR

So my little brother comes here to teach me a lesson? Show me right from wrong? You're a guitar player... What the fuck is a guitar player doing killing my men? Ruining my business...

MARIACHI

Your men killed the woman I loved.

CESAR

Mauricio did that. That has nothing to do with me.

MARIACHI

He worked for you. You put that crazy bastard in that town, he was your responsibility.

CESAR

And you killed him, so what do you want from me? Mauricio was crazy. I'm sorry about that. He was good at running the business and that's why I put him there. We don't set out to kill innocent people.

MARIACHI

You just buy innocent people. You don't kill them until you've run out of use for them.

Cesar glances at Carolina.

CESAR

I'm sorry... Okay? I'm sorry.

(beat)

Will you forgive me, Manito? You think I'd do anything against my own brother on purpose?

Mariachi says nothing. Cesar turns his attention back to Carolina.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CESAR

But who's this? Isn't she the woman you love now? You see? When I take something away I replace it with something else. She's all yours, Manito. Isn't she a piece of work? She runs one of our best fronts.

Cesar looks deep into her eyes.

CESAR

I mean... she used to run one of our best fronts.

CAROLINA

(quietly)

Bastard.

CESAR

Sorry about your bookstore... I was afraid you might run off with this guy. I had to make sure you'd bring him to me.... Had I known it was my kid brother I'd have acted differently.

MARIACHI

You have to answer for the lives you've ruined. Not just mine. Everyone's.

CESAR

(his temper is back)

If you want to right all the wrongs, be my guest! Walk into any government official's office, put a bullet in their head and you'll be killing someone involved in what's going on. You have no idea how far this trail leads. I work for very powerful people. And I was moving up, jumping through their hoops, trying to prove that I could be one of them. When all of a sudden... you come along and make me and my operation look incompetent. You have ruined me, manito.

MARIACHI

Something had to be done. Brother or no brother you've gone too far.

A few Henchmen are walking along the wall behind them. Two more flank just a few yards behind Carolina and Mariachi.

CESAR

Look at you...
(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CESAR (cont'd)

You came here to kill me. Like you said: Brother or no brother...

(beat)

Papa wouldn't be so proud of you anymore.

You were his little guitarrista... his little mariachi... And now you're just a piece of shit like me.

Mariachi raises his head. He stares right into Cesar.

Cesar notices that Mariachi's HANDS are fidgeting too close to his sides.

CESAR

Marito...

Carolina is ready to run out of the gate and get the hell out of here.

CESAR

Marito... put your hands up.

Mariachi closes his eyes. He doesn't want this. We can see he doesn't want this. His look on his face is begging his brother not to do this.

Cesar aims his gun at Mariachi.

CESAR

Put them up.

Mariachi raises his hands HALFWAY. His eyes are filling with tears.

CESAR

I'm sorry marito, but as good as you've become, I know you'll never work for me.

Mariachi takes a deep breath, and then raises his hands up all the way.

CESAR

And anyone that doesn't work for me... works against me.

Mariachi breathes deeply as the countdown begins...

CESAR

And where you're going, you won't be needing her...

Cesar points the gun at Carolina.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A tear rolls down Mariachi's face. As he whispers...

MARIACHI

5, 6, 7, 8...

Carolina turns slowly to Mariachi. Realizing, she looks back to Cesar.

CESAR

Goodbye, Carolina...

Carolina DIVES to the ground. Cesar is caught by surprise, and RE-AIMS the gun down at her.

Medium shot of Mariachi as his two .45's SHOOT UP from his sleeves into his WAITING HANDS.

Cesar sees this and re-aims his gun AT MARIACHI.

SUPER SLOW MOTION as Mariachi LEVELS his pistols and FIRES. The bullets mercilessly tear at his brother's flesh until he drops into the dirt like a bloody rag.

Carolina LEAPS to her feet and grabs the guns behind Mariachi's waist, she SPINS around and BLASTS the two Henchmen behind them. Another Henchman is atop the wall and running towards her for a closer shot. Her back is to him.

Carolina spins in time to shoot enough bullets to take him down, along with everything around him. She's not the most accurate shooter, but she shoots enough bullets that one eventually finds her target.

Carolina sees Mariachi, who is crouched on the ground, holding his dying brother in his arms.

Close-up of Cesar, his mouth gaping and shuddering... as if trying to say something. He chokes on the silent words... before breathing his last breath.

Mariachi holds his dead brother, and cries.

Carolina puts her hand on his shoulder as Mariachi stares at the ground through the tears that wash down his face.

MARIACHI

(voice over)

Everyone I've killed... was someone's father...
someone's son... someone's brother...

Mariachi looks into his brother's face, and makes the sign of the cross with his gun, then lifts his brother off of the ground. The sun is setting as Mariachi carries his brother out the gate.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The small hospital clinic is operating as usual. The patient of the moment is the little Boy with the guitar on the bed beside him, and a life support hook-up. He's unconscious. Mariachi is at Niño's side, continuing with his NARRATION.

MARIACHI

We pay for our crimes. One way or another, we pay.

Mariachi plucks a tune on Niño's guitar. Teaching himself a new variation to the original song. Carolina is watching them from the doorway. She's trying to say what she's been wanting to say for hours.

CAROLINA

I'm sorry for... pushing you to go after him.

Mariachi looks at her as if it's something he's trying to put behind him.

CAROLINA

Why didn't you say anything?

MARIACHI

(continuing with the song)

You wouldn't have let me go through with it.

(plays some more)

And I had to decide for myself.

Carolina accepts his answer.

MARIACHI

There's no such thing as an easy payback. But I did the right thing.

(motioning to Niño)

He's my brother now. The younger brother I never had. Someone full of hope, ideals...

(smiles)

talent.

Niño is silent. Carolina is crying.

Niño's FATHER enters the room. Mariachi sees him and stands. He brushes Niño's hair one last time.

MARIACHI

Practice.

Niño hears nothing. On his way out, Mariachi grabs the father by the arm in a tight grip.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIACHI

Don't destroy his dreams... just because you
couldn't fulfill yours.

Mariachi's about to leave it at that, but decides to give the back of Dad's head
a nice hard shove. He walks out of the room, and Carolina follows.

IN THE HALLWAY

CAROLINA

Where are you going?

He pulls out the SMASHED BULLETS SCULPTURE. He's made a necklace
out of it. He places it around her neck. He kisses her.

MARIACHI

Far away...

Mariachi gives her the paper wrapped wad of advance money. He walks
down the hall, as she looks on. He leaves the hospital, and the darkness
outside swallows him. Carolina sits on a bench, dropping the money down
on the bench beside her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE CITY STREETS OF SANTA CECILIA - SUNRISE

Mariachi walks through the town one last time. He has his guitar case at his
side, dressed in his full Mariachi garb. He passes the corner where the
CHILDREN are setting up for their day's work. His Pit Bull is with them.
Mariachi pulls the choke collar from his breast pocket. It dangles at his side.

MARIACHI

(to his dog)

Time to go.

Pit Bull follows Mariachi, who is walking ahead. The children call their Dog,
who STOPS in the street. He looks back between Mariachi and the Children.

Mariachi shrugs, and walks up to the dog. He pets him, looks into his eyes...
Then TOSSES the choke collar to the Children.

MARIACHI

(to his dog)

See ya around.

Mariachi wanders off and the Pit Bull returns to the children. Neither looks
back.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARIACHI ON THE ROAD - SUNRISE

Mariachi is walking down the same road he entered the town from. A truck is parked up on a hill. It's BUSCEMI'S TRUCK.

BUSCEMI

You did real good. Got your money right here.
They're real happy with what you did.

MARIACHI

Keep it. You shouldn't get paid for killing your
own family.

BUSCEMI

(confused)

Suit yourself...

MARIACHI

What would you do with a guitar case full of guns?

BUSCEMI

Sell it. Why, you giving me your case?

MARIACHI

Nope, I'm selling you my guns.

BUSCEMI

(handing him a bill)

Fifty bucks.

Mariachi takes the bill and dumps the guns into the bed of the truck.

BUSCEMI

(seeing the quantity)

Alright here's another 50. Wanna lift?

Mariachi nods a definite "no."

BUSCEMI

What are you gonna do now?

Mariachi shrugs.

BUSCEMI

You're a driven man... See ya.

Buscemi drives off. The truck leaves the screen, revealing Carolina, who is speeding up behind Mariachi in the Monster Truck. She stops next to Mariachi. Mariachi is closing the empty case.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROLINA
What did you do with your toys?

MARIACHI
Sold 'em.

CAROLINA
Giving up the gun?

Mariachi nods a yes.

CAROLINA
Hop in.

Mariachi is about to open the door.

CAROLINA
Wait. You swear?

Mariachi holds up his right hand and puts his left on his heart.

MARIACHI
I swear.

CAROLINA
(smiling)
Okay. Hop in...

CLICK! A .45 pops up from his sleeve and into his hand. Carolina turns and sees it.

MARIACHI
(shrugs)
Just in case.

He climbs in the front seat.

We see the SCORPION walking in front of the truck. His stinger is raised high, ready to strike. The truck drives right at it, missing it by an inch.

The Monkey pops up from the bed of the truck and shoots his little pistol.

The Scorpion explodes. The truck fades into the RISING SUN. Niño's SILHOUETTE... larger than life, superimposes over this image, by entering the frame from the left against the orange sky. With his guitar, he plays the tune he practiced throughout the movie. The music score rises, integrating with his little song... as the credits roll. The picture fades.

END