

BORDERLAND

Proposed Series Pilot

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"Deadly Spoor"

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. RUGGED DESERT TERRAIN - NIGHT

The SOUNDS of UNSEEN ANIMALS SCURRYING. INSECTS CHIRPING. Seemingly desolate during the day, the high desert brush pulses with life at night.

The nocturnal symphony abruptly goes STILL. Silence reigns.

FIVE HUMAN SILHOUETTES emerge from the night, clad in body armor, night-vision goggles and carrying weapons. Their movements are cautious and disciplined, the POINT MAN studying the terrain in front of them intently, the TEAM LEADER close behind sweeping the field in front of them with the muzzle of his weapon, the other three patrol members forming LEFT FLANK SECURITY, RIGHT FLANK SECURITY and REAR SECURITY.

As the patrol draws closer, their uniforms reveal them as U.S. ARMY SOLDIERS.

The Point Man signals for a halt and crouches, his attention riveted on his immediate surroundings.

The point man point to where the rank would be on his patrol cap and then points to the ground (The signal for the leader to come forward.)

The Team Leader moves forward.

The following conversation is carried out *sotto voce*.

POINT MAN

Sarge, you better have a look at this.

TEAM LEADER

(crouching down)

You think they're trying to fool us?

POINT MAN

Could be...

(considers)

But I doubt it. These tracks are fresh.

PUSH IN ON THE GROUND IN QUESTION

Numerous BOOT and SHOE PRINTS overlapping the ground, creating a mosaic of overlapping and smudged tracks. It is clear that some of the tracks are intersecting with the main pathway on an oblique angle.

SNICK!

Point Man draws a COMBAT KNIFE from a sheath on his load bearing gear and touches the tip to the wall of one of the tracks, which immediately CRUMBLES.

POINT MAN (CONT'D)

Marginal erosion. Crumbles to the touch. Maybe an hour or two old at the most.

TEAM LEADER

Illegals.

The Point Man rises and moves off, back-tracking the intersection point a short distance, the rest of the patrol adjusting to maintain their tactical posture.

TEAM LEADER (CONT'D)

How many?

POINT MAN

This is strange.

(gestures at tracks)

I've got one guy, relatively short judging from his stride length, although he moves quickly, wearing sneakers. The others guys seem to be wearing the same brand of boot but are working really hard to try to stay in each other's prints.

TEAM LEADER

So they're deliberately trying to hide their numbers.

POINT MAN

Not your typical border-hopper behavior, Sarge.

TEAM LEADER

No, this looks more like a covert infiltration. Maybe drug mules.

POINT MAN

We sure as hell don't want to get into a shooting match then. Not when all we've got loaded up is blanks.

Point Man and Team Leader exchange knowing looks.

TEAM LEADER

We'll head to the rally point and call for extraction. Consider the exercise terminated.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT FOOTHILLS - NIGHT

The Five-Man Army Patrol moves as quickly as it dares, picking its way down a well-traveled pathway. The Point Man continues to read the sign on the trail, the tension on his face and the rest of the patrol building.

The Point Man again signals a halt, the team reacting immediately, scanning the darkness with their night-vision goggles for signs of ambush.

INSERT GROUND SHOT

A DISCARDED CIGARETTE BUTT lies at the base of vegetation just off of the trail.

POINT MAN

(frustrated) I am not sure that we should be tracking these guys. We gotta get back and call "end-ex" to this game. I'll tell the MPs just after I leave the shopette with a 12 pack.

TEAM LEADER

Gotta love the nicotine fix.

POINT MAN

It's not the smoking that concerns me.

He directs the Team Leader's attention...

INSERT ANOTHER GROUND SHOT

An OVAL-SHAPED IMPRINT in the soft soil near the discarded butt.

POINT MAN (CONT'D)

Whoever crouched here for a smoke break was armed.

TEAM LEADER

Rifle butt?

POINT MAN

Yeah. The optimist in me wants to say maybe he's the only one packing what's probably an AK.

TEAM LEADER

Since when are you an optimist?

POINT MAN

Since I realized we might be tracking armed men who are probably highly motivated not to get caught. Besides which, other than making a lot of noise, without live rounds we're just playing "Army" out here. These guys are playing for keeps.

One of the Flankers is attracted to SOMETHING UNSEEN to us in the woods. He cautiously steps closer for a better look.
(pause)

FLANKER

Oh God.....

SOUND OF RETCHING.

The rest of the patrol whips their heads in the direction of the sound. They collectively move closer. Fingers on the triggers of weapons which are little more than cap guns at present.

REVEAL -- A DECAPITATED CORPSE

Lying sprawled on the desert floor, a DARK STAIN on the earth witness to the brutality visited upon the unfortunate victim.

The sick Soldier sheepishly wipes his mouth.

Point Man and Team Leader draw closer...

TEAM LEADER

We've gotta get reinforcements out here pronto.

POINT MAN

Why would they cut off his head?

TEAM LEADER

Maybe the same reason they lopped off his hands as well?

Off a brief glimpse of the victim's upper limbs which end in
BLOODY STUMPS we --

FADE OUT.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT CRIME SCENE - DAWN

TITLE: Fort Huachuca, Arizona

The area around the dumped corpse is sealed off with YELLOW CRIME SCENE TAPE. Armed MILITARY POLICE have formed a perimeter and are scouring the area in various directions. Two plainclothes CID INVESTIGATORS (TABOR and GALLOWAY) poke around the body, which has been partially draped with a blanket, and rifle the pockets of the clothing looking for clues.

The WHUMP-WHUMP SOUND of an approaching BLACKHAWK HELICOPTER attracts everyone's attention.

CID TABOR

Great. Somebody on high has apparently taken an interest in our little *soire*.

CID GALLOWAY

I hope they brought breakfast. I'm starved.

The Blackhawk swoops in, TURBINES WHINING, setting down in a flat area a short distance away. The rotor wash kicks up a CHOKING CLOUD OF DUST which quickly settles on nearby surfaces.

EXT. BLACKHAWK HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

The CARGO DOOR slides open and CAPTAIN WHITNEY DIMARCO ducks out of the aircraft, running clear of the whirling blades. Lithe and athletic, DiMarco wears her AC uniform well, but there's a hard set to her face which suggests she's far more than a pretty face. Yet she is too young to be a very experienced investigator.

EXT. DESERT CRIME SCENE - CONTINUOUS

As soon as DiMarco is clear of the helicopter it lifts off, departing as quickly as it arrived.

The MP's and CID Investigators warily watch her approach. For her part, DiMarco pretends not to notice the eyes upon her, instead focusing on taking in the scenery in the rising light, which is spectacular in its stark beauty.

Before DiMarco is quite within earshot --

CID TABOR

Think she's good enough to eat?

His partner grins in reply. They both straighten up as DiMarco draws closer and their attention is drawn to the CAPTAIN'S BARS on her cover and uniform.

CID TABOR (CONT'D)

Captain DiMarco? I don't believe that we've met, Ma'am. I'm Warrant Officer Tabor.

(indicates his partner)

Warrant Officer Galloway.

DIMARCO

Gentlemen.

CID GALLOWAY

You must be new to the post.

DIMARCO

I transferred in three days ago.

(beat)

So what've we got?

CID TABOR

A new twist on an old favorite. The Case of the Headless Mex.

DiMarco nods and brushes past the pair, squatting down to examine the corpse more closely.

CID GALLOWAY

He's getting a bit ripe, Ma'am.

DIMARCO

I can deal with it.

She scans the body, noting the JAGGED WOUND on the neck and the arms ending at the wrist in bloody stumps.

CID TABOR

So what brings you out here? This is a criminal matter. Not spooky CI stuff.

DIMARCO

You say that with such certainty.

CID TABOR

With all due respect, Ma'am, I've been doing this for a while. What we've got here is someone who must've pissed off the wrong party--

DIMARCO

So they chopped off his head? Is that usual criminal behavior here on the border?

CID GALLOWAY

Some of our southern neighbors are animals, Ma'am.

DIMARCO

So I've heard. Drugs and people flow north, guns flow south. Some balance of trade...

(beat)

The question that is begging to be asked is have you found the missing head or hands?

CID TABOR

No, Ma'am. MP's are still looking.

Near one of the parked Humvees, an MP gets off the radio and approaches the trio.

CID TABOR (CONT'D)

Maybe they found something.

MILITARY POLICEMAN

Sir, I've been instructed to inform you that the Border Patrol has been called in. One of their tracking specialists.

DIMARCO

"Tracking specialists?" You mean like a cowboy?

A CELL PHONE RINGS. DiMarco reaches into her field jacket and removes the phone. Answers.

DIMARCO (CONT'D)

Captain DiMarco.

(beat)

But sir, this is a military post. The CID are supposed to handle it.

(MORE)

DIMARCO (CONT'D)
(pause) I understand. Thank you,
sir.

She clicks the phone off.

CID TABOR
New orders?

DIMARCO
Not exactly. But we're to extend
every courtesy and cooperation to
the Agent when he gets here.

O.S. the RUMBLING OF AN ATV ENGINE piques their attention.
The CID Investigators exchange glances.

CID GALLOWAY
Here comes the cavalry.

CID TABOR
Actually if it's who I think it is,
his folks were the ones planting
arrows in Custer's boys.

DIMARCO'S POV - in the distance, a single rider on a four-
wheel all-terrain vehicle (ATV) is approaching their
position.

DIMARCO
You mean to tell me they've
actually got Indian trackers
deployed?

CID TABOR
The guy we're talking about isn't a
full-blood. Maybe full crazy, but
not full Indian.

CID GALLOWAY
Although Homeland Security's got
'em too. Shadow Wolves. All Indian
unit. Mostly working the Tohono
O'Odham Reservation and
thereabouts.

CID TABOR
You're not originally from here,
are you Captain?

DIMARCO
(self-deprecating)
I barely know a mesa from an
arroyo. I'm a Wop from
Philadelphia.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - CONTINUOUS

BORDER PATROL AGENT ERIC PRESCOTT guns the ATV's throttle as it crests a hill. He's clearly enjoying himself until he takes note of the activity in and around the crime scene perimeter. The smile vanishes, replaced by a frown which grows deeper the closer he approaches.

EXT. DESERT CRIME SCENE - CONTINUOUS

Prescott parks the ATV near the Army's Humvees and dismounts, pulling off his helmet. He looks around, nervously scouting the terrain, listening, even smelling. An obvious look of disgust crosses his face as he stalks towards Captain DiMarco and Warrant Officers Tabor and Galloway.

CID GALLOWAY

Hey, *kemo sabe*, Border Patrol can't spring for a proper g-ride?

PRESCOTT

(good naturedly)

I'd tell you to have carnal relations with the horse you rode in on, Galloway, but I'm thinking you'd get more out of it than the horse.

CID GALLOWAY

Easy there, Tonto, we all can't be communing with the animals and spirits. Some of us live in the real world. The one where bad people do really nasty things like cut off people's heads and hands.

Captain DiMarco and Prescott size each other up momentarily. Perhaps we sense a momentary electric spark flicker between them, but we can't be sure.

DIMARCO

I'm Captain DiMarco. Counter-Intelligence.

PRESCOTT

Agent Prescott. Reasonably intelligent.

Prescott's quip elicits a quick smile from DiMarco, which she quickly hides.

DIMARCO

So I hear that you're a tracker?

PRESCOTT

In theory, all agents are taught to track to some degree. Some of us are a little more effective in practice than others. But, yeah, I'm a tracker.

CID TABOR

Agent Prescott is being modest. I've heard he can cut sign so well that just by looking at a track, he can tell what the person ate the meal before or if he's got a raging case of hemorrhoids.

PRESCOTT

Observation and deductive reasoning. You CID guys should try it some time. Could clear up some of your open cases.

Prescott steps past them and squats down beside the corpse. He removes a SMALL NOTEBOOK and PEN from a pocket and begins rapidly jotting down notes.

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)

You know, you guys are right. This one's missing his head. And his hands.

Agent Prescott pulls out a tape measure. He measures the tracks. He measures the distance between tracks. And he makes notes.

CID GALLOWAY

Wise ass... And here I was, about to ask you how the hell you can track off the back of that ATV?

Prescott holds up a PORTABLE GPS unit.

PRESCOTT

Occam's Razor. "All other things being equal, the simplest explanation tends to be the correct one."

Prescott rises and straightens. Scans the MP's that are milling around and frowns.

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)

Maybe one day it'll get through to you that contaminating the scene by stomping all over it makes my job a lot harder.

CID TABOR

Didn't think it would matter much, as we haven't been able to determine a clear line of departure. Whoever did this tried pretty hard to cover their tracks.

PRESCOTT

Well, Captain DiMarco, since you seem to be the ranking officer from the Big Green here today, would you be so kind as to ask your troops to un-ass themselves from the scene before they muck things up any further?

DIMARCO

Muck things up?

PRESCOTT

They're polluting my tracks.

Prescott stalks off without waiting for a reply, his eyes scanning the ground as he goes to work, trying to identify the back trail and direction of travel of the perpetrator(s).

DIMARCO

Tabor, call the MP's in and let's get the Coroner's Office out here to pick up the stiff. And Galloway, once you have enough crime scene photos, head back to the vehicles. Stop polluting his tracks.

CID TABOR

Yes, Ma'am. I'll stop the pollution.

Tabor and Galloway move off and DiMarco hustles to catch up with Prescott.

EXT. DESERT CRIME SCENE - OUTER PERIMETER - DAY

Prescott is studying the ground and low-lying vegetation intently, his eyes scanning and interpreting subtle clues even amid the co-mingled TRACKS of combat boots and small animals.

He pays little heed to DiMarco as she shadows him, fascinated by his concentration and the comfort he draws from being in his element.

DIMARCO

So this is what "cutting sign" is all about?

PRESCOTT

It's a process. You've gotta be patient, you've gotta be focused, and every now and again, it helps to be lucky.

He squats down. We RACK IN ON

A FAINT IMPRESSION

A PARTIAL TREAD IMPRINT from a hiking boot. Distinctly different pattern than the treads on the soldiers' combat boots.

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)

Here we go. One of your head-knockers walked right over this without even seeing it.

DIMARCO

Cut us some slack. We're used to getting our clues from radio intercept and human sources.

PRESCOTT

Maybe so, but they gotta be aware of their surroundings.

DIMARCO

We all play our part.

PRESCOTT

The art that I practice is known as combat tracking. Not focussed tracking. It was developed in Rhodesia - what is now known as Zimbabwe. But it came there from here. I move fast. I don't pontificate a lot. But I am focussed like an animal.

He moves off, following the trail like a bloodhound.

DiMarco moves after him. She almost has to run.

DIMARCO

You ever serve, Prescott?

PRESCOTT

Uncle Sam's Misguided Children. I got to play in the sandbox before I punched out and came over to Border Patrol. (pause) I am a United States Marine.

Prescott moves quickly from track to track. He moves forward almost by guessing where the next one will be. He does not examine the tracks in detail.

DIMARCO

So I guess I can expect some inter-service rivalry so long as we're working together?

PRESCOTT

Who said anything about working together?

DIMARCO

I've been instructed to cooperate with you fully in the investigation, but make no mistake, Fort Huachuca is a sensitive installation and we take beheadings on post as a serious breach of national security.

PRESCOTT

That's comforting to know.

(beat)

You ready to do some walking this morning, Army chick?

She nods and glares at him.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT FOOTHILLS - DAY

Prescott and DiMarco pick their way over the baked terrain, following the trail of their quarry. They have kitted themselves out with packs and canteens. Prescott is now carrying an M-4 CARBINE in addition to his holstered sidearm; DiMarco only has her sidearm.

She sweats.

PRESCOTT

You doing okay, Captain?

DIMARCO

I'm fine. You don't think I'm going to let some Jarhead show me up now, do you?

PRESCOTT

You look to be in good condition, Captain.

An awkward beat passes as Prescott realizes that his comment could be misinterpreted. DiMarco allows him a smile, secretly flattered by the compliment.

DIMARCO

I take fitness seriously. And out here, you can call me Whitney.

PRESCOTT

Habits are hard to break, I guess. I'm Eric.

DIMARCO

It's nice to meet you, Agent Eric.

PRESCOTT

Likewise, Captain Whitney.

The walk on in silence for a moment or two, enjoying the stark beauty and solitude amid the stifling heat of a southwestern desert morning.

DIMARCO

I'm told you've got some Indian blood?

PRESCOTT

Northern Cheyenne. On my grandmother's side. On my grandfather's side, supposedly some Oglala Lakota. Same band as Crazy Horse.

DIMARCO

So I guess tracking runs in the genes?

PRESCOTT

Oh, it's not just an Indian thing. Indigenous cultures worldwide have honed these skills. It's how our ancestors survived.

DIMARCO

My ancestors were busy with blood feuds when they weren't growing grapes or olives.

Prescott spies something in the underbrush and moves in for a closer look.

ANGLE ON

A SMALL BEAD

As PRESCOTT'S HAND closes in on it.

PRESCOTT AND DIMARCO

Study the find closely.

PRESCOTT

This look familiar?

DIMARCO

Matter of fact it does. It's a prayer bead. And where there's one...

They both direct their attention to the surrounding ground. Sure enough, DiMarco gives a little EXCLAMATION OF TRIUMPH as she retrieves a BROKEN STRING OF PRAYER BEADS which have spilled out on the ground.

PRESCOTT

I bet somebody's pretty upset right now.

DIMARCO

You know these are quite popular among the Shia.

A pregnant silence.

PRESCOTT

You're thinking infiltrators?

DIMARCO

The border's wide open. You know it and I know it. Hell, the politicians know it but won't do anything about it because business interests have their hands shoved so far up their asses you can see their fingers every time one of these politicians opens his mouth.

Prescott points to a nearby ARROYO and an obvious DISTURBANCE visible from where they stand.

PRESCOTT

I think we'd better check that out.

EXT. DESERT ARROYO - DAY

Prescott and DiMarco have scooped out the disturbance, which contains BLACKENED DEBRIS from a small fire, and UNEARTHED the CORPSE'S SEVERED HEAD and the PARTIALLY BURNED AMPUTATED HANDS.

Prescott fights the natural urge to gag but DiMarco seems to take it all in stride. She's not about to show weakness in front of him.

EXT. SHADED OVERHANG - SONORAN DESERT MOUNTAINS - DAY

Hiding from the heat of the day, a twenty-something MEXICAN NATIONAL whom we'll come to know as ENRIQUE GUADALUPE huddles in a mountainous vantage point a short distance from the U.S./Mexican Border. Despite the heat, he's shaking and looks terrified.

Upon closer inspection, we SEE that he has suffered a GRAZING WOUND across his midsection which has been crudely bound with an improvised bandage torn from some clothing. The WOUND SEEPS a thin TRICKLE OF BLOOD.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT MOUNTAINS - NEAR ENRIQUE'S HIDEOUT - DAY

SEVEN WELL-ARMED MEN, five of whom are Middle Eastern in appearance, wearing a mixture of off the shelf civilian adventure wear and hiking boots but moving like trained soldiers, scour the terrain, clearly searching for someone or something.

For now we'll refer to these folks as the INFILTRATORS. It probably doesn't take much imagination to deduce that poor Enrique Guadalupe is the focus of their search.

FADE OUT.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. SONORAN DESERT MOUNTAINS - NEAR ENRIQUE'S HIDEOUT - DAY

The seven Infiltrators have spread out and are efficiently but fruitlessly scouring their surroundings.

One of the two "All American" looking men, who we'll call JONES, turns to one of the Middle Eastern Men, who we'll come to know as NASSIR. Nassir radiates a definite air of quiet menace and is clearly deferred to by the other Middle Easterners.

JONES

This is useless. We're burning daylight.

NASSIR

I do not want, as you Americans like to say, any "loose ends."

JONES

Trust me, that greaser took the round. He probably crawled into some ditch to die.

NASSIR

Can we be sure of this?

JONES

We can be sure the longer we're out here, greater our chance somebody spots us.

NASSIR

Your point is taken.

JONES

This thing is already going sideways as it is. We have a schedule to keep.

Nassir stops in his tracks and fixes Jones with an icy glare.

NASSIR

Are you questioning my judgment?

A tense beat. Then:

JONES

No, Agha.

NASSIR

Good.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENRIQUE'S VANTAGE POINT - SONORAN DESERT - DAY

Enrique WATCHES the men searching for him, scarcely daring to breathe, his teeth gritted against the throbbing pain in his side. Some of the Infiltrators are close enough to his concealed location to hear him if he were to twitch a muscle.

CUT TO:

EXT. SONORAN DESERT MOUNTAINS - NEAR ENRIQUE'S HIDEOUT - DAY

Prescott and DiMarco are carefully picking their way over the rugged terrain, both of them starting to sweat as the daytime heat builds.

DiMarco carries a camelbak and frequently stops to suck water from the tube.

DIMARCO

This doesn't make a lot of sense.
We're almost paralleling the
border. Why aren't these guys
making a beeline for civilization?

PRESCOTT

My guess is they're looking for
something. Or someone.

DIMARCO

Do you have a signal on your radio?

Prescott pulls a small TACTICAL RADIO from a pouch on his gear and keys it.

PRESCOTT

(quietly into radio)
Go for Sidewinder One.

Prescott releases the mic's key. The HISS of STATIC. No reply.

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)

Sidewinder One to Dispatch.

Again he listens to no avail for a response.

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)
Radios only work intermittently out here.

DiMarco pulls a cell phone from her gear and powers it up. No bars.

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)
No pizza delivery out here either.

DIMARCO
(putting away phone)
If we need backup then, we're out of luck?

PRESCOTT
Afraid so.

He nods at her holstered pistol.

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)
Is that just for show or do you know how to use it?

DIMARCO
I go to the range every month. And I've been to Iraq.

PRESCOTT
Oh...

DIMARCO
So what's the plan?

PRESCOTT
We'll try to follow the sign and see where it leads. Headquarters will put up the teathered bird or else a UAV soon to get some eyes in the sky and we'll hopefully make contact then.

CUT TO:

THE INFILTRATORS

Regrouping near Enrique's hideout, clearly frustrated by the unplanned events.

Nassir queries another one of the Middle Easterners (ABDULLAH) in rapid-fire Arabic.

NASSIR

You have found nothing? Not a scuff mark? Or blood trail?

ABDULLAH

No, *agha*. It is as if he has been swallowed by the desert.

NASSIR

We must find this little worm!

The other "All-American," who we'll refer to as SMITH, responds in fluent Arabic.

SMITH

Why? What does he really know?

Nassir ponders this. Before he can respond, another one of the Middle Easterners catches his attention with a frantic hand signal.

NASSIR

(hisses)

Get down.

The Infiltrators obediently and immediately sink into a crouch, a well rehearsed movement. Nassir moves stealthily and smoothly to a position where he can view whatever has caught his companion's attention.

ANGLE ON

PRESCOTT AND DIMARCO

Moving cautiously on terrain at a somewhat lower elevation.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRESCOTT AND DIMARCO'S POSITION - SONORAN DESERT - DAY

Prescott's eye is drawn to a FLASH OF SUNLIGHT REFLECTING from the rocks above.

PRESCOTT

Down!

He pushes to DiMarco behind cover, whipping his M-4 Carbine up as he scans the general location where the flash of sunlight had appeared. Nothing.

DiMarco draws her BERETTA PISTOL, suddenly realizing just how exposed and vulnerable they are.

DIMARCO

Where?

PRESCOTT

Flash of light. Up there.

He points with the barrel of his weapon. Their eyes and ears strain to see or hear something out of the ordinary. No such luck.

DIMARCO

I don't see anything.

PRESCOTT

It could've been the sun reflecting off a piece of quartz. Maybe even some scrap metal.

DIMARCO

Think we should play those odds?

PRESCOTT

Depends. You feeling lucky, Captain DiMarco?

CUT TO:

EXT. INFILTRATOR'S POSITION - SONORAN DESERT - DAY

The seven men we have been observing retreat quietly in disciplined fashion, picking and choosing their route carefully and visually demonstrating knowledge of ANTI-TRACKING TECHNIQUES such as using sticks and branches to minimize the sign left behind.

EXT. NEAR ENRIQUE'S VANTAGE POINT - SONORAN DESERT - DAY

Prescott and DiMarco inspect the general area where the Infiltrators' search for Enrique Guadalupe was interrupted.

Prescott's eye is drawn to FAINT IMPRESSIONS of their passing, which he points out to DiMarco, including PARTIAL PRINTS, SCUFF MARKS on rocks, BENT BRANCHES on vegetation, etc.

He points to them by cupping all of his fingers until she nods that she sees them. Then, he moves on to the next sign.

PRESCOTT

See this?

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)

This one guy here is really walking on the outsides of his feet. But his boot tracks are not worn down. Which tells us what?

DIMARCO

I don't know.

PRESCOTT

He's got new boots. I call him bubbles for the circles on his boot print.

DIMARCO

Wow.

PRESCOTT

And this guy? I call him heavy. He's carrying a lot of their weight. Back there I saw where he put his pack down for a second. But he's got the biggest feat, but they sink the farthest into the dirt.

DIMARCO

What about this guy?

PRESCOTT

He's the leader. He's the one who stops at every decision point and looks for the best path. I call him left because he's wounded his left leg at some time in his life. Walks with a limp.

His RADIO CRACKLES TO LIFE.

BORDER PATROL DISPATCH (O.S.)

Welfare check on Sidewinder One.
Over.

PRESCOTT

Go for Sidewinder One.

BORDER PATROL DISPATCH (O.S.)

Status update, Sidewinder One?
Over.

PRESCOTT

We've tracked a small party. Maybe five or six men, possibly more.

(MORE)

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)

They may be muling drugs or something else. We've got reason to believe at least some of them are carrying rifles. Over.

BORDER PATROL DISPATCH (O.S.)

Be advised, Sidewinder One, we've got a helicopter on the way. You are to disengage, find an LZ, sit tight and wait for the cavalry. Over.

PRESCOTT

We'll lose these guys. Over.

BORDER PATROL DISPATCH (O.S.)

That's coming from on high. You're to pull back so we can come get you. Confirm your understanding. Over.

PRESCOTT

Understood. Out.

He clicks off the radio's mic in disgust.

DIMARCO

What's that all about?

PRESCOTT

Probably border politics. Somebody gets nervous we might get in a shooting match with *Federales* or Mexican military. Half the things we do out here are for show.

DiMarco holds up the STRING OF BROKEN PRAYER BEADS, which have been placed in a SMALL PLASTIC BAG.

DIMARCO

This isn't for show, Agent Prescott. These aren't migrants looking for work or drug mules.

PRESCOTT

Maybe not. But the question is, will anybody listen?

EXT. INDUSTRIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - MEXICAN BORDER TOWN - DAY

A seedy and disreputable district filled with BADLY WEATHERED WAREHOUSES, SMALL BUSINESSES, and an air of desperation and neglect that the relative affluence of the nearby U.S. side of the border can't dispel.

INT. DELIVERY TRUCK - ON THE STREET - DAY

DETECTIVE JAVIER AMILCAR, late 30's, dressed in plainclothes, watches the activity on the street like a hawk. He takes a long drag on a smoldering *cigarillo* and stubs it out on the scarred surface of the truck's dashboard.

Detective Amilcar's attention is riveted on a LARGE WAREHOUSE which seems indistinguishable from those surrounding it. He speaks over his shoulder in Spanish to someone O.S.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

You are sure of the address?

VOICE (O.S.)

(Spanish)

Of course.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

Tell me again.

VOICE (O.S.)

The phone call came this morning to the boy's father. He is to bring six hundred thousand dollars U.S. to a location which he will be directed to from a series of pay phones. If the police are involved, the boy will be killed. If the money is short, the boy will be killed. If anything seems out of place, the boy will be killed.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

Then how can we be sure that we have the right warehouse?

VOICE (O.S.)

There is a source inside of the *bruja's* organization. He confirmed reference was made to delivery of a package that required special handling. The boy's school is only a few miles from here, which would make transporting him without being seen much easier.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR
If we're wrong...

He trails off, leaving the thought unspoken. He pulls a PHOTOGRAPH from his pocket. A YOUNG BOY, maybe five or six years old, grinning at the camera, eyes full of life and promise. Detective Amilcar stares at the image, moved.

VOICE (O.S.)
The unit is in position. They will
move in on your command.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - MEXICAN BORDER TOWN - DAY

Detective Amilcar steps out of the delivery van and moves to the sidewalk side, pulling on BODY ARMOR and tightening the straps as he does so. He crosses himself and reaches into the van, pulling out an ASSAULT RIFLE. He quickly moves up the street, ignoring the few PEDESTRIANS that quickly avert their eyes and duck into doorways.

VARIOUS ANGLES

As a MEXICAN PARAMILITARY ASSAULT TEAM

Converges on the Warehouse from various directions, quickly surrounding it and establishing a perimeter.

HEAVILY ARMED ENTRY TEAMS

"stack" outside of the WAREHOUSE DOORWAY as Detective Amilcar joins them.

The LEAD MAN looks to Detective Amilcar for a signal. Detective Amilcar crosses himself and nods.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - MEXICAN BORDER TOWN - CONTINUOUS

The Mexican Paramilitary Assault Team makes a DYNAMIC ENTRY, SMASHING through the doorway and spilling into the cavernous interior.

QUICK SHOTS

Of the Assault Team and Detective Amilcar navigating through a VIRTUAL MAZE of CONTAINERS and VARIOUS ODDS AND ENDS which obstruct their views and fields of fire. The savvy viewer may even infer that this has been DELIBERATELY ARRANGED.

REVEAL

The Assault Team maneuvers around yet another blind corner and encounters a scene of horror. A YOUNG BOY, obviously dead, bound to a chair, nearby BLOOD SPLATTERS suggesting he died hard. Draped on the body is a HANDWRITTEN SIGN, PROCLAIMING IN SPANISH: FOR THE SINS OF THE FATHER.

Detective Amilcar sags against a nearby container, literally deflating. He's failed, and he knows it.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR
(in Spanish)
What kind of animals would do this
to a child?

CUT TO:

A COMPUTER SCREEN

A Web-based NEWS SITE featuring an article on SANGRE REAL, a violent Mexican drug cartel.

INSERT PHOTO FROM ARTICLE

An attractive middle-aged Hispanic Woman. The CAPTION identifies her as ESMERALDA OLEGARIO, a female industrialist, who is suspected of having ties to the Sangre Real cartel.

CUT TO:

EXT. RANCH HOUSE PORCH - SONORAN DESERT - DAY

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ (mid 20's) views the news Web site from her LAPTOP. Even sitting, there's a quality about her that suggests stillness is not in her repertoire. She's a go-getter.

An older HISPANIC MAN (50's) joins her on the porch, clutching a cup of coffee. Weatherbeaten, a battered and sweat-stained COWBOY HAT perched on his head, RICARDO VELAZQUEZ is every inch the embodiment of the hardscrabble border rancher.

RICARDO VELAZQUEZ
Can't leave it alone for more than
an hour?

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ
I'm sorry, *padre*. You know how it
is. Work.

RICARDO VELAZQUEZ
Doesn't look like work to me.

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ
(teasing)
If it doesn't involve clearing
brush or mending fence, it isn't
work in your book.

RICARDO VELAZQUEZ
Never much trusted things I
couldn't touch. Hardly seems real.

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ
Anyway, you know how my boss is. I
take a few personal days, my first
vacation in almost two years, and
he's sending me homework.

RICARDO VELAZQUEZ
You should've expected that when
you went to work for him. He's
ambitious. Folks are saying
Congress isn't big enough for him.
(beat)
So what's he want from you?

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ
Esmeralda Olegario. She runs a
number of successful *maquiladoras*.
She rubs shoulders with a lot of
powerful people on both sides of
the border. He's asked me to do
some digging.

RICARDO VELAZQUEZ
He wants you to do his own dirty
work?

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ
It's not like that.

RICARDO VELAZQUEZ
You be careful, *hija*. Leave that
work to the FBI and the Army, men
with guns.

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ
This is not only a battle for "men
with guns".

She grimaces.

Naomi shuts down the computer and puts a smile on her face.

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ (CONT'D)
How's Tommy doing today?

RICARDO VELAZQUEZ
Still asleep. He had a rough night.

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ
Go easy on him, *padre*. It's going to take time.

RICARDO VELAZQUEZ
The Army said the same thing.

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ
Maybe the Army then is right. It takes time to heal.

RICARDO VELAZQUEZ
He needs to get back on the horse that threw him off.

She shrugs, not knowing what to say.

INT. INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER - FORT HUACHUCA - DAY

FRANK MITCHELL (40's), U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Supervisor, surreptitiously looks at SPORTS SCORES on his SMART PHONE SCREEN. His face betrays any number of emotions, although he tries to appear blase.

PRESCOTT (O.S.)
You wanted to see me, Frank?

Mitchell kills the phone's browser and guiltily puts the phone away, but not before Prescott sees the fancy device.

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)
Neat gadget.

MITCHELL
Beats being tied to a desk or lugging a laptop everywhere.

PRESCOTT
Once they get their claws in you there's no escape.

Mitchell studies Prescott for a moment, wondering if there's a double-meaning to what he said. Prescott's demeanor is rather casual, and Mitchell decides for the moment to let it go.

MITCHELL
Rumor has it you and this new Army
Captain...

He searches for the name.

PRESCOTT
DiMarco. Captain DiMarco.

MITCHELL
Captain DiMarco, that's right. You
two had a bit of an adventure this
morning.

PRESCOTT
Just another day on the border.

MITCHELL
Headless bodies dumped on post are
not yet routine. And I don't intend
for them to be, at least not on my
watch.

PRESCOTT
There's some concern about
nationality. We may have some
exotics.

MITCHELL
So I've heard.

PRESCOTT
The public already knows we've got
drug cartels openly operating cross-
border. How long before an Islamic
terrorist group exploits our
vulnerability?

MITCHELL
There's no evidence that's what
we're dealing with.

PRESCOTT
Not conclusive, at least not yet.
But we did find prayer beads.
DiMarco thinks they might be Shia.
You know, shia, shiite, whatever,
the ones from Iraq and Iran.

A CELL PHONE RINGS. Prescott reaches into his pocket, removes
a decidedly less sophisticated (and expensive) one than
Mitchell's.

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)
(listening in)
I'll be over there quick as I can.

He hangs up.

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)
Captain DiMarco. She's at the
County Coroner's. They're going to
cut on the body.

MITCHELL
You'll keep me posted.

PRESCOTT
Sure thing, Frank.

MITCHELL
One other thing... How's Christina?

PRESCOTT
She's good. Working extra shifts.

MITCHELL
Always a demand for nurses. You
going up to see her?

PRESCOTT
This weekend, why?

MITCHELL
Don't let the job rule your life,
son. She's a good woman.
(beat)
They aren't so easy to find.

PRESCOTT
I'll keep that in mind.

FADE OUT.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. HIGH RISE OFFICE BUILDING - MEXICO CITY - DAY

Establishing. High rent building with all the amenities.

INT. EXECUTIVE CORNER SUITE - OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The usual trappings of a high-powered executive. Sleek, modern furniture. Large desk. Sitting area with leather couch and deeply padded wing chairs. PHOTOS on the walls of various DIGNITARIES, BUSINESS LEADERS and other GLOBAL ELITE. We'll catch GLIMPSES of a STRIKING MEXICAN WOMAN (40's) posing in the various photographs.

The raw projection of power is softened somewhat by eclectic touches of MEXICAN FOLK ART and FINELY WOVEN TEXTILES mixed in with the other material.

The conversation which follows is in Spanish.

SULTRY FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Tell me again.

ROUGH MALE VOICE (O.S.)
There was a complication.

REVEAL

Two figures standing side by side next to a LARGE WINDOW with an EXPANSIVE VIEW OF THE MEXICO CITY SKYLINE.

The woman with the sultry voice is ESMERALDA OLEGARIO, seen earlier in the photo collage. She's a looker, but there's also a definite hardness and menace that peaks through her professional demeanor.

Standing deferentially to her side, despite his physical bulk, is a MAN whose expensive suit can't conceal his origins in the rough and tumble streets. Meet GUILLERMO, who we'll soon learn is Esmeralda's "fixer" and chief enforcer.

ESMERALDA
A "complication?" How unlike you, Guillermo, to sugarcoat your words.

GUILLERMO
The package was delivered. As we had agreed.

ESMERALDA

But...

GUILLERMO

Our delivery man has not returned.

ESMERALDA

Enrique?

GUILLERMO

Yes, Esmeralda.

ESMERALDA

He's young. But he has always been reliable.

GUILLERMO

Which is why I am concerned.

ESMERALDA

How do we know then that the package has reached its destination?

GUILLERMO

A source on the American side. A body was found early this morning on the delivery route. The *gringos* are apparently taking this quite seriously. They do not appreciate bodies being left on the doorstep of their military installations.

ESMERALDA

Is it Enrique?

GUILLERMO

I am awaiting photos. Apparently the head and hands were removed.

Esmeralda steps closer to Guillermo and touches his elbow. He visibly flinches. It's as if he expects her to throw him through the window. It's rather disconcerting.

ESMERALDA

It appears our new client is rather maintenance intensive.

GUILLERMO

(nervously)

It's nothing that we cannot handle.

ESMERALDA

I am counting on that, Guillermo.

She turns her back to him and crosses to her desk.

THE DESK

Prominently visible is a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH of Esmeralda and a pretty TEENAGE GIRL.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

Our new client tends to favor bold statements. They enjoy the spotlight.

GUILLERMO

This is true.

ESMERALDA

You of all people know that I am a private woman...

(beckoning at photos on walls)

This is what is expected of me. I do what I must to fit in...

(beat)

And to provide for the safety and security of my family. Do you understand?

GUILLERMO

Yes, Esmeralda.

ESMERALDA

Good. I expect that you will do as you must. Starting with Enrique.

EXT. COCHISE COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE - ARIZONA - DAY

Establishing.

INT. AUTOPSY ROOM - COCHISE COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE - DAY

DiMarco and Prescott attend the autopsy of the beheaded corpse found earlier that day, performed by the FEMALE COUNTY CORONER.

THE CORPSE

Reveals the familiar "Y" incision. A sheet is partially draped on the body for modesty. The SEVERED HEAD is at the foot of the body, a rather jarring juxtaposition.

Prescott's attempts to remain nonchalant are rather transparent. DiMarco appears more at ease with the procedure, a fact not lost on either of them.

FEMALE COUNTY CORONER
I hope we're not seeing the start
of a new trend.

PRESCOTT
Headless bodies?

FEMALE COUNTY CORONER
You know, sometimes keeping track
of intact bodies is a challenge for
the staff. If they have to keep
tabs on parts, my life is going to
get a lot more complicated.

DIMARCO
(business-like)
So what can you tell us?

FEMALE COUNTY CORONER
Well, for one, he's dead.

DiMarco glances up, notices the coroner grinning at her.

FEMALE COUNTY CORONER (CONT'D)
A little coroner humor. Helps
lighten the mood.
(turning to Prescott)
If you feel the need to hurl, try
to get it in here.

She kicks a WASTE RECEPTACLE over to Prescott. He smiles wanly.

PRESCOTT
Bad decision to eat lunch
beforehand.

DIMARCO
We're interested in any identifying
markings. Particularly those that
might indicate a country of origin.

FEMALE COUNTY CORONER
I'm expecting an analysis of dental
work to be forthcoming. That may
give us a good idea.

She hesitates. Indicates a BOX OF SURGICAL GLOVES.

FEMALE COUNTY CORONER (CONT'D)
 Why don't you glove up and give me
 a hand?

As DiMarco snaps on the gloves...

FEMALE COUNTY CORONER (CONT'D)
 I'm actually expecting the dental
 work to confirm a suspicion. Based
 on the evidence...
 (to DiMarco)
 Let's roll him onto his side.

DiMarco and the County Coroner roll the body. The CORPSE'S
 BACK is CROSS-HATCHED WITH SCARS. DiMarco sharply inhales.

PRESCOTT
 You recognize this?

DIMARCO
 It's not uncommon among
 fundamentalist Shiites to flog
 themselves.

PRESCOTT
 I thought mutilation of the dead
 was prohibited.

DIMARCO
 You know these folks pick and
 choose beliefs to suit their world
 views. Like many others.

DiMarco and the County Coroner gently, almost reverently,
 allow the corpse to roll onto its back.

FEMALE COUNTY CORONER
 I found something else.

She crosses from the autopsy table to a COUNTER, where the
 PERSONAL EFFECTS and "pocket litter" have been deposited. She
 holds up an ADVERTISEMENT torn from a phone directory.

DiMarco retrieves the ad and holds it up for Prescott.

FEMALE COUNTY CORONER (CONT'D)
 It was tucked away in his sock.
 Wrapped in plastic.

PRESCOTT
 A titty bar in Nogales. Across the
 border. These guys really are
 repressed.

DIMARCO

We need to look into this. Can your office arrange a liaison?

PRESCOTT

It's in a rough neighborhood. You sure you want to do this?

DIMARCO

It won't be my first time.

PRESCOTT

Going to a rough neighborhood?

DIMARCO

No, visiting a strip club.

INT. LOBBY - COCHISE COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE - DAY

Prescott and DiMarco are on their way out of the building. On his way in, looking harried, is COUNTY SHERIFF ALAN ROBERTS, who raises his hand in greeting.

SHERIFF ROBERTS

Agent Prescott. How goes it?

PRESCOTT

Not bad, Sheriff. Not bad.

SHERIFF ROBERTS

I suppose that's the best we can expect sometimes.

An awkward beat. Prescott realizes Sheriff Roberts is staring at DiMarco.

PRESCOTT

Sheriff Roberts, Captain Whitney DiMarco. Captain DiMarco, Sheriff Roberts.

SHERIFF ROBERTS

You're new.

DIMARCO

I was posted here two weeks ago. But, I've been here for the basic course, the captain's course, and counter-intell agent's course.

SHERIFF ROBERTS

Oh, CI. Got it.

Sheriff Roberts gives her a closer look.

SHERIFF ROBERTS (CONT'D)
How did you get stationed here?

DIMARCO
I just got back from Iraq. And so they gave me a good selection of assignments. I like the hiking and biking here.

There is an odd pause as the Sheriff looks at her a bit too close.

PRESCOTT
What are you doing here today, Sheriff?

SHERIFF ROBERTS
Wild Bunch...
(off DiMarco's curious look)
Local biker gang. Heavily involved in the narcotics trade. And gunrunning. One of these lowlifes got himself waxed last night.

DIMARCO
Any suspects?

SHERIFF ROBERTS
(laughs mirthlessly)
You need some? I'm up to my elbows in gang-related assholes with a thing for gunplay and their fellow travelers.

DIMARCO
Sorry to hear that.

SHERIFF ROBERTS
Comes with the territory. It's been nice chatting. Maybe we can compare notes later?

DIMARCO
You know where to find me.

SHERIFF ROBERTS
(to Prescott)
She's definitely a keeper. If you don't mind me saying, Captain DiMarco, you're a lot prettier than the previous counter-intel officer.

DIMARCO
I'll take that as a compliment,
Sheriff.

SHERIFF ROBERTS
(tipping his hat)
Good luck, Captain. You'll be
needing it.

EXT. MEXICAN GOVERNMENT BUILDING - NOGALES - DAY

Establishing shot of an edifice which appears only partially completed. SCAFFOLDING RINGS parts of the building, but no work appears to be ongoing.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MEXICAN GOVERNMENT BUILDING - DAY

DiMarco and Prescott are seated at a LARGE CONFERENCE TABLE which has seen better days. PAPER CUPS OF COFFEE are in front of them, but otherwise they are alone.

PRESCOTT
Coffee tastes like horse piss.

DIMARCO
You obviously haven't had Army
coffee.

The DOOR to the room opens and MAJOR RAFAEL SOCORRO enters the room, rather imperiously. His uniform identifies him as a high-ranking *Federale*. He speaks in accented English.

MAJOR SOCORRO
Captain DiMarco? Agent Prescott? I
am sorry to keep you waiting.

DiMarco and Prescott know this isn't really the case but let the lie pass.

PRESCOTT
We appreciate your willingness to
see us, Major Socorro.

MAJOR SOCORRO
Of course. Is it not right that
those of us charged with enforcing
the law cooperate and share
information?

DIMARCO
Which is what brings us here.

MAJOR SOCORRO

As you Americans say, "I'm all ears."

DIMARCO

A body was found yesterday within the boundaries of Fort Huachuca. The victim was beheaded and his hands were crudely amputated, probably with a hunting or combat knife.

MAJOR SOCORRO

I'm afraid that the drug dealers that are plaguing both of our efforts are growing more bold each day.

PRESCOTT

These probably weren't your average drug mules, Major. Whoever did this employed some pretty fancy anti-tracking techniques. Drug mules aren't that sophisticated.

MAJOR SOCORRO

I see.

PRESCOTT

We have reason to believe that the perpetrators might be Middle Eastern.

MAJOR SOCORRO

I see.

DIMARCO

Do you see, Major Socorro?

Socorro is taken aback by DiMarco's challenge.

MAJOR SOCORRO

It's the great fear of you *Norteamericanos*. Al Qaeda sneaking in through your soft underbelly. The Mexican border.

DIMARCO

It's a legitimate concern.

MAJOR SOCORRO

What are we to do? We are not a rich country.

(MORE)

MAJOR SOCORRO (CONT'D)

Many of our people are poor and hungry. Unlike you Americans...

As he speaks, his GOLD ROLEX flashes on his wrist.

MAJOR SOCORRO (CONT'D)

If so many of your people did not crave drugs, maybe we would have a more peaceful border.

DIMARCO

We'd have a "more peaceful border" if we actually had some real cooperation instead of parades and puppet shows.

PRESCOTT

Captain --

MAJOR SOCORRO

Please, Agent Prescott, let the Captain continue.

DIMARCO

We're not here to discuss politics or philosophize about the inequitable distribution of wealth in your country, Major. We're here for some answers.

MAJOR SOCORRO

Mexico is filled with answers. If you know the right question to ask. We're a very honest people.

Prescott slides the PHONE DIRECTORY AD, ENCASED IN A PLASTIC EVIDENCE BAG, across to Socorro.

PRESCOTT

Do you recognize this?

MAJOR SOCORRO

It's a popular spot. Many *touristas*. Many businessmen.

PRESCOTT

Do you have someone familiar with it?

MAJOR SOCORRO

I think most of the men in this building are familiar with it, Agent Prescott. But you might try Detective Amilcar of the policia.

DIMARCO

And where can we find Detective Amilcar?

INT. DETECTIVE "BULLPEN" - MEXICAN GOVERNMENT BUILDING - DAY

Detective Amilcar is seated at his overflowing desk, examining CRIME SCENE PHOTOS, engrossed in his task. Prescott and DiMarco approach.

PRESCOTT

Detective Amilcar?

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

Si.

PRESCOTT

I'm Agent Prescott, Customs and Border Enforcement. This is Captain DiMarco. U.S. Army.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

And how can I help the U.S. Army today?

DIMARCO

We were directed to you by Major Socorro. He said you may be able to assist us.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

Do either of you smoke?

DiMarco and Prescott exchange glances.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR (CONT'D)

A terrible habit, I know. My son has asked me to quit.

He sweeps the photos into a MANILA ENVELOPE and stands up.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR (CONT'D)

I feel the need for a smoke. Why don't you join me?

EXT. MEXICAN CITY STREET - DAY

Detective Amilcar, Prescott and DiMarco stroll down the street, Amilcar savoring his *cigarillo* in the late afternoon sun. He's considerate enough to make sure that the smoke doesn't drift into the Americans' faces.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR
It's best that we talk outside.

DIMARCO
Unwanted ears?

DETECTIVE AMILCAR
This is Mexico, Captain DiMarco. It seems that the criminals often know more than the police. I think that's not an accident.

PRESCOTT
So why should we trust you?

DETECTIVE AMILCAR
You shouldn't. Why should you believe that I'm an honest Mexican cop?

DIMARCO
Because we need someone that we can trust. And you have an honest face.

Detective Amilcar laughs.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR
Don't take this the wrong way, Captain DiMarco, but is that your professional opinion or a woman's intuition?

DIMARCO
Does it matter?

DETECTIVE AMILCAR
Perhaps not...
(beat)
I want you to see something.

He hands Prescott the manila envelope. Prescott opens it.

CLOSE ON

CRIME SCENE PHOTOS FROM THE KIDNAPPING MURDER SCENE.

Prescott and DiMarco flip through the images. They are clearly effected by the senseless violence.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR (CONT'D)
These are the kinds of monsters that I'm fighting every day. Most of whom will go unpunished.
(MORE)

DETECTIVE AMILCAR (CONT'D)

Most of whom go about their business with the blessing of those with money on both sides of the border.

Prescott slides the photos back into the envelope. Hands it back to Amilcar.

PRESCOTT

If we work together, maybe we can put an end to this. See that the guilty are punished for their crimes.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

Will you follow the evidence? No matter where it leads?

DIMARCO

Of course.

Amilcar reflects for a moment. Makes a decision.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

So how can I help?

Prescott passes him the plastic encased ad. Amilcar recognizes it.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR (CONT'D)

This ties into a case you are pursuing?

PRESCOTT

We think so.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

It's one of the many businesses owned by Esmeralda Olegario.

DIMARCO

I've heard of her.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

No doubt you have heard of her charitable works and her efforts to provide reasonably paying jobs in the *maquiladoras* which she controls. What you perhaps haven't heard is that her family established the *Sangre Real* Cartel.

PRESCOTT

So she's guilty by association?

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

It goes beyond association, Agent Prescott. Her father met an untimely end in the late 1980's. Gunned down by rivals. Both of her older brothers presumably assumed leadership in his place. Both of them are now deceased...

(beat)

Correction. One we know is deceased, because we found enough pieces of his body to make a positive identification. The other has not been seen in five years.

DIMARCO

And you believe she's assumed the family business?

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

Have you heard of Occam's Razor?

DiMarco glances at Prescott, remembering his earlier comment.

DIMARCO

"All other things being equal, the simplest explanation tends to be the correct one."

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

You get a gold star, Captain.

PRESCOTT

We need to visit this club.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

I'm afraid that won't work.

DIMARCO

Why not?

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

Because two *gringos* asking questions in a club owned by Esmeralda Olegario are not going to get a warm reception.

DIMARCO

We need to know if any Arabs -- or any Middle Easterners -- have been seen there recently.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

May I ask why?

Prescott and DiMarco share a look. A decision is made.

PRESCOTT

We may have an infiltration situation on our hands.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

I can make a deal with you. If you will, how do you say, "keep me in the loop," I can make some inquiries.

PRESCOTT

We can do that.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR

There's something else you should know. Watch your back with Major Socorro...

(off of their reactions)

How many honest Mexican cops do you expect to meet in one day?

INT. MAJOR SOCORRO'S OFFICE - MEXICAN GOV'T BUILDING - DAY

Major Socorro is seated behind his IMPOSING DESK. The desk is uncluttered and virtually pathologically neat, in stark contrast to Detective Amilcar's. A BANK OF PHONES is aligned to one side.

Socorro UNLOCKS a DESK DRAWER and removes a CELLULAR PHONE. He POWERS UP the device and dials a number from memory, pointedly ignoring the phones on his desk.

An ELECTRONICALLY DISTORTED VOICE picks up on the other end after a SINGLE RING.

VOICE (O.S.)

(filtered)

Que tal?

MAJOR SOCORRO

(rapid-fire Spanish)

We have a situation. Two Americans were here to see me. An agent from *La Migra* and an Army officer.

VOICE (O.S.)

(Spanish)

Have they left the building?

MAJOR SOCORRO
I do not know. I sent them down to
speak with Amilcar.

VOICE (O.S.)
Do you think that wise?

MAJOR SOCORRO
It may throw them off the scent.

VOICE (O.S.)
We need you to take care of this.

MAJOR SOCORRO
They were visiting in an official
capacity.

VOICE (O.S.)
You know what to do.

MAJOR SOCORRO
It is risky.

VOICE (O.S.)
And that is why we engage your
services. To manage such risks.

The voice on the phone CLICKS OFF.

Socorro looks pensive, worried perhaps. He CLEARS THE CALL
LOG. Hesitates, then proceeds to dial a new number.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MEXICAN GOVERNMENT BUILDING - DUSK

Detective Amilcar escorts Prescott and DiMarco to their
UNMARKED VEHICLE in the crowded lot. The dark paint and
general attempt to appear non-descript screams "government
issue." The rapidly setting sun casts SHADOWS and adds to a
palpable sense of foreboding, despite the play of light.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR
Good luck with your case.

PRESCOTT
You too.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR
You will keep in touch?

DIMARCO
Scout's honor.

Prescott and DiMarco DRIVE OFF in the unmarked vehicle. As Detective Amilcar watches them go, he pulls a ROSARY from his pocket and rubs it for luck.

INT. U.S. GOVERNMENT SEDAN - STREETS OF NOGALES - DUSK

Prescott and DiMarco drive through downtown Nogales, passing CROWDS of people.

DIMARCO
So what do you think?

PRESCOTT
Of Amilcar?... I think we can trust him.

DIMARCO
Knowing who to trust out here is hard. It complicates things.

PRESCOTT
Trust and the border don't exactly go hand in hand. Out here it can be life and death.

IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR

A PAIR OF LATE MODEL SPORT UTILITIES are approaching fast.

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)
Got your seat belt on?

DIMARCO
Always. Why?

She looks over her shoulder and SEES the rapidly closing vehicles as Prescott accelerates.

PRESCOTT
I think we may have kicked over a hornet's nest.

EXT. STREETS OF NOGALES - VEHICLE CHASE - CONTINUOUS

Prescott and DiMarco's sedan tries to pull away from the obviously pursuing SUVs, but to no avail. The few VEHICLES on the roads which are not part of the chase YIELD or force the American Sedan and SUVs to SWERVE around them when the drivers are too slow to react.

EXT. ROADBLOCK - NOGALES STREET - CONTINUOUS

HEAVILY ARMED FEDERALES wearing BALACLAVA MASKS man a HASTILY ASSEMBLED CHECKPOINT.

They WATCH as the approaching chase vehicles rapidly draw nearer.

INT. U.S. GOVERNMENT SEDAN - NOGALES STREET - CONTINUOUS
 Prescott and DiMarco can clearly SEE the roadblock ahead.

DIMARCO
 You're not planning on stopping.

PRESCOTT
 Never crossed my mind.

DiMarco has pulled her CELL PHONE out and attempts to dial, but the SCREEN INDICATES "NO SERVICE."

DIMARCO
 I can't get a signal.

PRESCOTT
 They may have a jammer.

Prescott SEES a parallel road coming up fast, leading away from the roadblock.

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)
 Hang on.

He abruptly wrenches the wheel, sending the sedan SKITTERING into the turn, nearly CLIPPING PEDESTRIANS that scatter in panic as the vehicle barely avoids slamming into storefronts.

The SUVs, moving too fast, sail past the turn even as they BRAKE, locking up the wheels amid the SCREECH OF RUBBER. Both vehicles slam into REVERSE to continue the pursuit.

EXT. SECONDARY STREET - NOGALES, MEXICO - CONTINUOUS

The U.S. Government Sedan is forced to a crawl by a festive STREET CELEBRATION which has spilled over into the street. Despite HONKING, the PEDESTRIANS show little inclination to get out of the way.

The pursuing SUVs ROAR up, quickly closing distance.

The windows of the LEAD VEHICLE power down and MASKED GUNMEN SPRAY AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE at the nearly immobile sedan, completely unconcerned with the presence of bystanders.

INT. U.S GOVERNMENT SEDAN - NOGALES, MEXICO - CONTINUOUS

The SOUND of BULLETS IMPACTING BODYWORK and tearing up the surrounding ground is DEAFENING.

PRESCOTT

We're gonna have to bail!

DiMarco looks grim. Prescott draws his pistol.

PRESCOTT (CONT'D)

You're not armed?

DIMARCO

You can't carry a gun into Mexico!
They're illegal here.

PRESCOTT

So is shooting at us! I'll cover
you.

DIMARCO

We go together!

Prescott JAMS the car's transmission into "park." WRENCHES his door OPEN and COMBAT ROLLS out of the vehicle --

EXT. SECONDARY STREET - NOGALES - CONTINUOUS

Prescott smoothly comes out of his roll into a crouch and OPENS FIRE at the closing SUVs.

DiMarco bails out of her side of the stricken sedan and DUCKS into a nearby alley. Prescott retreats after her, racing around the front of the vehicle which provides cover as the SUVs SCREECH to a halt.

FADE OUT.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NOGALES, MEXICO - DUSK

Prescott and DiMarco race through a twisting maze, glancing over their shoulders for the pursuit that they know is coming.

DIMARCO

Are we heading in the right direction?

PRESCOTT

I hope so! I feel north.

More SHOTS RING OUT behind them.

DIMARCO

Can we make it?

EXT. PLAZA SQUARE - NOGALES - CONTINUOUS

Prescott and DiMarco emerge from the alley into a CROWDED square filled with TOURISTS, SHOPKEEPERS and MEXICAN CITIZENS.

They blend into the jostling tide of humanity as the Masked Gunmen emerge from the alley and cast about for their quarry.

ANGLE ON PRESCOTT AND DIMARCO

Shoving through the crowd, Prescott keeps his pistol pressed against his leg, concealing it from onlookers to avoid panic.

He SEES a ROPED OFF OPEN MANHOLE and grabbing DiMarco's hand, races towards it...

ANGLE ON THE MASKED GUNMEN

One of them fires a BURST of AUTOMATIC FIRE from his assault rifle into the air. The crowd STAMPEDES, creating further confusion as the Gunmen shove their way through.

As the Plaza gradually clears of bystanders, the Gunmen exchange quizzical glances, unsure of where Prescott and DiMarco have vanished to.

INT. UNDERGROUND SEWER TUNNEL - NOGALES - CONTINUOUS

Prescott and DiMarco quickly make their way through the tunnel, trying not to choke in the foul and festering atmosphere.

EXT. NOGALES STREET - NIGHT

A MANHOLE COVER is shoved aside by unseen hands. Cautiously Prescott and DiMarco emerge from beneath street level, their clothing stained and torn.

EXT. PORT OF ENTRY - NOGALES BORDER CROSSING - NIGHT

Prescott and DiMarco join the STREAM OF PEOPLE crossing back into the U.S. A MEXICAN BORDER GUARD stops them on the Mexican side of the crossing. He smiles flirtatiously at DiMarco.

DiMarco and Prescott pull out their passports.

MEXICAN BORDER GUARD
Is everything okay? Did you enjoy
your visit, *senorita*?

DIMARCO
You have no idea.

INT. LOCAL BAR - SIERRA VISTA (U.S.) - NIGHT

Sheriff Roberts, off duty and out of uniform, is seated at the bar. A NEATLY MANICURED FEMALE HAND taps him on the shoulder and he turns to face --

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ

Dressed to the nines who flashes him a high-wattage smile.

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ
Buy a girl a drink?

SHERIFF ROBERTS
I'm old enough to be your daddy.

She LAUGHS and he rises to embrace her while signaling to the BARTENDER. They clearly know each other.

SHERIFF ROBERTS (CONT'D)
How's it working for the
Congressman?

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ
It has its moments.

SHERIFF ROBERTS
You know what they say about
government.

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ
What's that?

SHERIFF ROBERTS
Be thankful we don't get all that
we're paying for.

The Bartender deposits a DOUBLE SCOTCH next to her. Naomi
picks up the glass and mock toasts Roberts.

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ
I'll drink to that.

She knocks back a slug.

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ (CONT'D)
I'm hoping that you can shed some
light on certain issues of interest
to the Congressman.

SHERIFF ROBERTS
On or off the record?

NAOMI VELAZQUEZ
Off.

SHERIFF ROBERTS
Can I interest you in dinner?

EXT. TRUCK STOP - OFF OF INTERSTATE 10 - NIGHT

The seven Infiltrators huddle in the darkness amid the ROWS
OF 18-WHEELER RIGS.

In the background can be heard the roar of the INTERSTATE
HIGHWAY. And the low-roar of diesel engines idling.

At some point the men must have changed their garb, for they
are all dressed in CASUAL AMERICAN CLOTHES. Each man carries
a LARGE DUFFEL BAG of different color and manufacture.

The American who we know as Smith speaks.

SMITH
Everyone is clear on what to do?

Grins and nods. His companions seem giddy, perhaps triumphant.

SMITH (CONT'D)

Then we'll meet again in Phoenix.
In two days time.

EXT. FORT HUACHUCA - MAIN GATE - NIGHT

Establishing the nighttime activity on the post. The CHANGING OF THE GUARD SHIFTS and rhythm of military life.

INT. OPERATIONS CENTER - FORT HUACHUCA - NIGHT

DiMarco and Prescott sit on one side of a conference table, being debriefed by Supervisor Mitchell and a HANDFUL of other SUITS, presumably from other agencies, along with a pair of ARMY OFFICERS, including LIEUTENANT COLONEL WALKER and MAJOR HOWARD.

The brass are busy reading REPORTS, occasionally glancing up at DiMarco and Prescott.

LTC WALKER

It's quite an achievement, Captain DiMarco.

DIMARCO

Sir?

LTC WALKER

You've been here less than a week and you've managed to be involved in a running gun battle on the wrong side of the border.

DIMARCO

Sir, we were the ones doing the running.

MITCHELL

Agent Prescott, what exactly have you managed to get into?

PRESCOTT

This Major Socorro is probably dirty. There's no other explanation.

LTC WALKER

Actually there are plenty of other explanations...

(beat)

I've met Major Socorro. He heads up an elite *Federale* task force charged with rooting out corruption. He's a church-going Catholic. And he said he has a son in New Mexico.

DIMARCO

Perhaps he needs to start closer to home, sir.

LTC Walker shoots DiMarco a withering stare. She's borderline insubordinate, but he lets it pass. Prescott admires her tenacity and courage.

LTC WALKER

Perhaps, Captain, you shouldn't try to judge a man before walking in his shoes.

PRESCOTT

What about the stiff from yesterday morning? Was the coroner able to give us any more information on possible origin?

MITCHELL

Apparently the dental work is Eastern European. Which doesn't give us much to work on. I'm guessing that they use the same techniques in the middle east.

LTC WALKER

The truth of the matter is, for now we're treating this investigation as a criminal matter, not an intelligence one. Our friends here from the Bureau...

He indicates a pair of the Suits, who flash cold smiles.

LTC WALKER (CONT'D)

...Will be taking over from here.

DIMARCO

But, sir!

LTC WALKER

That's enough, Captain. I've heard what you have to say. You've used up your two bullets. And we're going with what I decided. Am I clear?

DIMARCO

Sir. Yes, sir.

LTC Walker turns to Prescott.

LTC WALKER

Agent Prescott. Your reputation as a tracker is considerable. And so far as I can tell, that is where your talents lie.

MITCHELL

We don't need you running off half-cocked. Or potentially triggering any international incidents. I'll see you in my office tomorrow.

LTC Walker neatly straightens the paperwork and tucks it into a file. Nods to Major Howard, obviously a pre-agreed signal.

MAJOR HOWARD

You've both shown initiative. That's not what's being questioned. What is of concern is your judgment, particularly regarding such sensitive matters. Certain decisions get made above your respective pay grades. Sometimes above the pay grades of everyone in this room.

LTC WALKER

It's late and I'm sure you're both exhausted. Get some rack time and I expect you both to be on your "A" Game from this point forward.

EXT. OPERATIONS CENTER - FORT HUACHUCA - NIGHT

DiMarco and Prescott leave in silence from the building.

DIMARCO

This is bull crap.

PRESCOTT

Agreed.

DIMARCO

Why don't they see this for what it is?

PRESCOTT

Maybe it makes the wrong folks uncomfortable. We can't have that, you know.

DIMARCO

So I guess I'll see you around?

Prescott shrugs.

DIMARCO (CONT'D)

I'll make you the same deal we made with Amilcar. I'll back channel and share whatever I've got, and you do the same.

PRESCOTT

Fair enough.

DIMARCO

You take care of yourself, Agent Prescott.

She walks off. Prescott watches her go, admiring her backside. His reverie is interrupted --

MITCHELL (O.S.)

Eric.

PRESCOTT

What was that about in there, Frank? You trying to throw me under the bus?

MITCHELL

Don't forget I'm your boss. I'm looking out for you.

PRESCOTT

Really?

MITCHELL

You've got a bright future ahead of you if you learn to play the game. Focus on what's important. Let things go that need to be let go. Otherwise, you'll piss everything away.

PRESCOTT
I'll take it under advisement.

MITCHELL
You do that. Think of me as your
rabbi.

PRESCOTT
I'm trying to picture that...
(beat)
Sorry, sir, but it just isn't
tracking.

He walks off. Mitchell watches him go.

INT. DETECTIVE "BULLPEN" - MEXICAN GOV'T BUILDING - NIGHT

Detective Amilcar is working late. The GRUESOME CRIME SCENE
PHOTOS have been tacked up around him. His CELL PHONE RINGS.

DETECTIVE AMILCAR
(Spanish)
I'm coming home... Is he awake?...
Kiss him for me.

EXT. U.S. / MEXICAN BORDER FENCE - ARIZONA - NIGHT

A deserted, remote strip of BORDER FENCE LINE. A SHAPE
detaches from the vegetation. Enrique Guadalupe, the wounded
Mexican coyote, rushes to the fence. Searching quickly, he
finds a CONCEALED HOLE, which he painfully wiggles through.

He stands, now on Mexican territory, and glances back at the
American side. Pressing his hand to his wound, he staggers
off into the darkness...

FINAL FADE OUT.

END ACT FOUR