

THE BORDER

Pilot

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO - DAY

Though the sky is blue with few clouds, the sun is so bright it practically white-washes the color palette. Below, a fly over of the hectic streets of Chihuahua.

EXT. SIDE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Four happy TEENS walk down a side street carrying groceries and pushing on one another.

An old Toyota pickup turns onto the road behind and barrels toward them. The teens drop their groceries and scatter like a covey of quail.

The truck picks one and follows her, CAMILA, 14.

TIGHT on the panic in Camila's eyes.

As the truck catches her, two thugs jump out and snatch her like cowboys dismounting from their horses to rope a calf.

A grandmother in the background watches the whole thing while sweeping her doorway.

She turns and goes inside, closing the door.

INT. FIVE STAR HOTEL - NIGHT

Camila looks quiet different now. She's been cleaned up, made up, and dressed up. She could pass for eighteen from twenty feet away, but this close, she's still just a little girl.

THE ORNATE DOORS

Camila stands in front of a floor-to-ceiling set of double cherry doors. A well-dressed Asian MADAME, MISS KIM, stands next to her.

The doors open and reveal a bedroom, and all we can see is the bed.

Camila doesn't budge. Miss Kim gives her a gentle nudge to get her going into the room.

EXT. RED DIRT ROAD - DAY

Fly over of a desolate and isolated stretch of blanched landscape until we find a dust devil moving along.

A PANEL TRUCK hauls ass across the hot desert.

INSIDE the cargo box are desperate people. Sweaty people. Woozy people. Sleepy people.

Faces. Worried eyes, dead eyes, exhausted eyes, closed eyes, Camila's eyes.

WIDE OPEN IN SHOCK.

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

Over distorted, quick cuts of bleached and dark images: blue skies, shocked open eyes, time-lapse of traffic at the border crossing, flash light on immigrants in the back of a truck.

BONO/U2

(Bullet the Blue Sky)

*I feel a long way from the hills of
San Salvador*

*Where the sky is ripped open and
the rain pours*

*Through a gaping wound, pelting the
women and children*

Pelting the women and children

Run, run in to the arms of America

END TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. U.S. BORDER CROSSING - DAY

From the sky, the border crossing is a frenetic blight on the landscape. Eight lanes of traffic, plus special lanes for big rigs, all coming together in the ultimate bottleneck.

INT. BORDER PATROL DETENTION CENTER - DAY

The facility itself is no-frills, government sterile, but it overflows with people - parents, children, stand-alone adults, and Border Officers.

A human processing center with far more humans than processors.

Camila and JUAN BARELA, 58, a singed matchstick, and her accompanying adult, are among the hundreds in the initial holding area.

INT. MAKESHIFT CHILDCARE ROOM - DAY

The noise of the chatter, crying, laughing, and playing is intense. Again, the helpers - Border Officers - are outnumbered and operate in triage mode.

A large interior room emptied of furniture now serves as a holding area just for children.

It's still drab, but enough toys and craft supplies have been brought in to give it splashes of color.

Kids of similar age play together in groups.

Many kids don't play at all. They sit or stand in silence. Some nap on little mats.

DEADRA RAMIREZ, 32, African-American, comes through a door beaming like the Good Witch of the North.

A naturally affable person with a Hollywood smile and vibrant eyes, her hands are full of popsicles.

The younger kids love her and drop what they're doing to run over and get her attention. They bounce up and down all around her like she's the ice cream man.

NOTE: From here on italics indicates spoken Spanish with English subtitles.

DEADRA

Hey little monsters, what kind of mischief are we into today?

KIDS

(shouting with their tiny voices)

Madre! Mamá! Miramé! Abuela!

She passes out the popsicles, then holds one back.

DEADRA

Abuela? Which one of you rats called me abuela!

A boy's eyes open wide and he covers his mouth.

She hands him a popsicle anyway and tussles his hair.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

I'm gonna have to work on you.

She fans her hands and SHOOS them away and they go back to their games.

Deadra notices one four-year-old BOY by himself, sobbing quietly but uncontrollably. She starts over.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

Gabriel? Son, come here.

Gabriel meets her half way and latches onto her leg like it's a life ring in a stormy ocean.

She pries him off enough to drop down to one knee and he latches on again, this time holding her neck.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

Shhh, shhh, shhh. Come on now little man, let's talk about it, it's all going to be fine, you'll see.

But, there are no words. He shakes his head side-to-side, no.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

Does your tummy hurt?

Head shake no.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

How about your head?

Another side-to-side no.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
Somebody in here being mean to you?

His sobbing slows, and she pulls a handkerchief and wipes the slobber off his face.

GABRIEL
 Mi padre es muerto ... estoy solo.

She holds him tight and stands.

DEADRA
Oh Gabriel, I'm so sorry. You are not alone. I'm here..

She rocks him a bit and kisses him on his forehead as her own eyes well and spill.

As she turns, Camila enters the room and is pointed to the other girls her age.

DEADRA'S POV -

Camila walks like the living dead to the other girls, then sits with her back against the wall, knees up, arms wrapped around them, head down.

Gabriel calms down. His eyes flicker and then he's out from exhaustion. She carries him to an open spot and lays him down on a mat.

A VOLUNTEER brings over a blanket and stuffed elephant.

VOLUNTEER
 I'll keep an eye on him.

Deadra tucks the blanket around him and snuggles the elephant under his arm.

INT. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - DAY

BRAD WHARTON, 53, face roughly hewn from stone, sits behind a desk with a coffee cup in one hand. Brad is Deadra's boss.

Deadra bursts through the door. He doesn't flinch.

DEADRA
 Did you know Gabriel's dad died?

He nods, ever so slightly.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
 Why did I just find him crying all
 by himself?

BRAD
 He was with the counselor, then
 another crisis came up and the
 counselor had to leave.

DEADRA
 And we couldn't find someone to sit
 with him until the counselor came
 back?

BRAD
 You know the situation. We don't
 have enough staff.

DEADRA
 Unbelievable. I, uh...to leave
 him...and crying...

She's out as fast as she came in.

EXT. DEADRA'S HOUSE - DAY

An old Kia Sportage pulls into the driveway of a modest
 basement rancher. The sun is low and casts golden hour light
 on the well-kept yard.

ERIC RAMIREZ, 32, a handsome, fit man in blue jeans and a
 blue firefighter t-shirt, sits on the steps. He has a green
 and silver lunch pail next to him.

Deadra walks over and he stands, smiling, and kisses her.

Twice.

DEADRA
 Oh, two kisses tonight?

ERIK
 One for each of us. How was your
 day?

She grabs his hand.

DEADRA
 It was a tough day. They're getting
 tougher. More kids.

ERIK

You always said you wanted a big family.

She playfully gut punches him.

DEADRA

Watch out, now, I'll start bringing 'em home by the car load.

ERIK

Do this.

He springs straight up, lands, shakes and shimmies his whole body, raises his arms over his head with jazz fingers, closes his eyes and takes three deep breaths.

She does the same.

ERIK (CONT'D)

There ya go. Shake the day away. Now when you walk through that door, you're entering a different dimension.

Her eyes brighten back up.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Put your arm around the monsters in there and let them recharge your spirit.

She lips a finger inside the waistband of his jeans and pulls him close again.

NOSE-TO-NOSE.

DEADRA

You are good at this lifesaving thing, thank you.

She gives him a kiss.

In the background, JAMAL'S face pops into the frame of the picture window. He's four. He KNOCKS on the window and waves.

Deadra waves back and hands Erik his lunch pail as he turns to leave.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

Hun?

He stops and turns.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

I may start a small kitchen fire
tonight so you have to come see me.

He laughs and continues to his car.

When Deadra turns back, the front door flies open and Jamal
leaps from the top step into his mamma's arms.

INT. DETENTION CENTER MEETING ROOM - DAY

Four people sit around a small conference table. Deadra, a
Case Worker, SANDY LUCK, 44, Camila, and Juan.

SANDY

*No birth certificate, no Mexican
ID, nothing with a name on it
anywhere.*

JUAN

*No. But, I am her uncle. She is
Camila Garcia-Aguirre.*

He reaches out for Camila's hand, but she jerks hers away.

Deadra notices and scribbles her thoughts in the case file,
watching Camila's face.

Camila only looks down at the desk.

DEADRA

*Mr. Barela, who can we contact in
Mexico to verify your relationship?
Is her mother your sister? Can we
call her?*

Juan pushes back from the table, hands up, and shaking his
head no.

JUAN

(in English)

No, no, no. You do not understand.
To call is to kill, see?

SANDY

Oh, so you do speak English?
Alright then. No, I don't
understand. How about you, Deadra,
do you understand?

DEADRA

No, I don't understand.

JUAN
They will kill whoever we contact.
Our whole family.

DEADRA
Who are they and why would they do
that?

Juan continues to shake his head.

Sandy and Deadra consider the point and the stand-off.

SANDY
Ok then. We will draw blood and run
a DNA test to see if you are
related, and then move your case
along.

JUAN is pleased and grateful. Camila is still flat.

JUAN
*Thank you. Thank you. We are safe
here. We will wait. Thank you.*

Deadra catches Sandy's eye and nods to the door.

DEADRA
Let's take a moment in the hall.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Deadra closes the door, but keeps her hand on the knob.

DEADRA
Something's wrong here. We need to
separate them while the labs are
done.

SANDY
He doesn't seem ill or dangerous.

Deadra's pleading eyes direct Sandy to take another look.

Sandy looks through the window in the door and studies Camila
and Juan.

He is fidgety and frightened. She is blank and withdrawn.

SANDY (CONT'D)
Okay. I agree.

Deadra opens the door and Sandy stands at the edge of the
desk.

DEADRA
Camila, come with me.

She and Juan stand. Camila makes the door, and Sandy steps between her and Juan.

SANDY
 Sir, you'll need to stay here while we do bloodwork.

Deadra shuts the door.

JUAN (O.C.)
 (heard through the door)
No! Where are you taking her? We are family! Please.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Deadra guides Camila away.

DEADRA
Camila? Is that your name?

Camila nods.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
Camila, we're going to take you back to the special area just for kids, is that okay with you?

Camila nods.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
We're going to do some bloodwork to help us know if you are related to Juan, do you understand?

She nods again.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
Do you speak English like your uncle?

CAMILA
 Yes.

DEADRA
 Is he your uncle?

Camila keeps quiet.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
Has he hurt you?

A no head shake.

They reach another counter, more like a nurse's station. Deadra fills out some paperwork and turns Camila over to ALICE, 28, a sassy shift nurse and Deadra's good friend.

ALICE
Who do we have here?

DEADRA
This is Camila. We don't think she's traveling with a relative.

Alice and Deadra share a look - such a tame way to identify someone who may be a victim of human trafficking.

ALICE
(to Camila)
Are you afraid of Mr. Barela?

CAMILA
All men.

ALICE
Okay, honey. That's good to know. We won't have any male staff members come near you. We'll do a blood work-up on you and keep you safe, well-fed, and comfortable.

DEADRA
She speaks English, too.

ALICE
(to Camila)
Very good, which do you prefer?

Camila shrugs.

Alice holds the clip board over for Deadra to review. It's a checklist.

Deadra runs her finger down the list. DNA, STDs, Drug Screen, Alcohol Screen, Complete RBC, Hormones, and Lipids are all checked.

Her finger stops on PREGNANCY.

She double-taps that unchecked box. Alice nods, takes the clipboard back and checks it, too.

DEADRA

Camila? I would like to give you a hug. Would that be alright?

She shakes her head no.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

Okay. I will check on you soon.

Alice takes Camila back to a private exam room.

INT. BREAK ROOM, DETENTION CENTER - LATER

Deadra sits at a round table with her lunch box open. Half a sandwich is in one hand, and she's about to take the first bite.

LOUD ARGUING and CRYING comes from the main room. It sounds like a riot is starting.

Deadra drops her sandwich and darts out of the room.

INT. MAIN ROOM, DETENTION CENTER - CONTINUOUS

CHAOS. Armed officers are hand-cuffing adults and prying kids out of their parent's hands.

Deadra runs into the room and sees the melee.

DEADRA

Whoa, whoa, whoa! What the hell is going on?

She beelines toward an officer.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. MAIN ROOM, DETENTION CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Brad intersects and gently positions Deadra to one side.

BRAD

It's alright, let me explain.

Arrests and separations continue in the background.

Brad pushes a memo into Deadra's hands.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Policy change. We're going to start charging every adult caught with the crime of illegal entry.

She looks at the paper.

DEADRA

What? We don't have the capacity...

BRAD

We're working on it.

DEADRA

And, the kids?

Brad covers his eyes for a second.

BRAD

Because the parents are charged with a crime and detained in jail, the kids are separated and held somewhere else.

DEADRA

Oh, no, no, hell no. That doesn't even make sense...

BRAD

Look, if a mom is picked up in Texas for meth, her baby doesn't go to jail with her. The baby goes to child protective services.

Deadra locks eyes with Brad.

DEADRA

Are we going to send these kids to child protective services?

Is that your plan?

BRAD

We're still working on the plan.

DEADRA

I see, got the cart before the horse, but it don't matter with these kids.

BRAD

Take it easy, we're working on it.

DEADRA

I need this job for my own family, but I don't know if I can do this. I don't know if I can be a part of this. Uh-Uhh.

BRAD

Those kids need you.
(pointing to the chaos)
And, a hundred others just like you.

Deadra is unmoved, her arms crossed.

BRAD (CONT'D)

This is a political ploy that will backfire. We just need to ride it out.

Deadra wads the memo into a ball and hands it back to Brad.

DEADRA

I'm feeling sick.

She exits the viewing room, leaving Brad in the dark.

INT. DEADRA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Erik sits at the dinner table with his sons, Jamal, who we met earlier, and MAXÍMO, 13, all altitude and no brains.

ERIK

(to Max)

What do you think about the Texans picking up Rod Walker as wide receiver?

MAX

Pssh. I don't care. It's not soccer.

ERIK

It's called conversation. Grown-ups do it.

MAX

I ain't no old G.

Deadra blusters in, arms full of her dry cleaned uniforms.

Erik gets up and takes her clothes and gives her a peck on the cheek.

ERIK

(to Deadra)

I'm worried about your son.

Deadra never breaks stride, starts taking off her uniform as she heads into the bedroom.

ERIK (CONT'D)

(pointing at Max)

You hear? I'm worried about you.

Erik follows Deadra into the bedroom. He reaches around from behind to help unbutton her shirt.

She grabs his hand...and starts CRYING.

She turns into his arms.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Hey now, what's got you so upset?

She wipes her eyes, rips off her shirt, buttons shooting across the room, and throws it in the laundry basket.

Then STOMPS it.

Her eyes fix into an angry glare as she takes off her boots and slacks.

Erik watches, but gives her space.

DEADRA

My job is killing me. That's what's wrong.

ERIK

What happened now?

DEADRA
You won't believe it.

Deadra paces in her underwear.

ERIK
I work in government, too,
remember?

DEADRA
They're arresting parents and
separating them from their kids.

Erik sits on the edge bed.

ERIK
Sheesh.

DEADRA
Playing politics with kids! Kids.

She steps into the small in-suite bathroom and splashes cold water on her face.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
I can't do it, honey. I won't do
it. I'll have to go back to
bartending.

Erik reaches out and pulls her to him, his head against her stomach.

INT. BORDER PATROL DETENTION CENTER - DAY

The detention center is in full chaos. It's overrun with families, crying kids, playing kids, crying parents - all hot, sweaty, and smelly.

Deadra still manages a smile as she sits with a mother and a daughter. But, the smile drops as she gets to the speech.

DEADRA
(to the mother)
*You will be charged with illegal
entry and detained for processing.*

The mother's eyes fill with tears.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
*We'll care for your daughter in a
safe and clean facility in the
meantime.*

The mother hugs her daughter tight and gives her a kiss, then allows her to go with Deadra.

INT. NURSES STATION - LATER

Alice grabs Deadra's eye and motions her over.

ALICE

We got some of the labs back on...
(gets name from chart)
Camila.

DEADRA

Okay.

ALICE

She's, uh, pregnant. And, has syphilis.

The news hits Deadra hard.

DEADRA

Damn it.

ALICE

We haven't talked to her yet. We treated the syphilis with penicillin and will run a few other tests to see how far along she is.

DEADRA

What about DNA?

ALICE

Not back yet. We pulled more blood from Juan to do a paternity test.

DEADRA

He could be the uncle and the father?

ALICE

Or, the father and the father, or nothing. We just need to wait and see.

DEADRA

Wait. Seems like all we do is wait.

ALICE

Pregnancy complicates things. This case is going to be a tough one.

She grabs Deadra's hand

ALICE (CONT'D)

I'm worried about you. Are you up for this one? Maybe you should transfer off the case.

DEADRA

I can't. It's too late. Everyone has let her go. Someone has to stick around and advocate for her.

ALICE

She'd still be in our care, you just wouldn't be in the middle of all the details.

DEADRA

I can't let it go.

ALICE

Yeah, I didn't think so. You want to tell her, or should I?

Deadra hugs her friend, fighting back her tears. While embraced, she whispers...

DEADRA

I'll tell her.

They let each other go but still hold hands.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

I'm leaving out the S-T-D. She doesn't need to hear that, too.

Alice nods her agreement.

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Juan sits alone at a desk. Brad and Deadra look in through the one way mirror from the viewing room.

BRAD

Are you sure you can be reasonable with him?

DEADRA

Yes, but I plan to push him hard and scare him into telling us the truth.

BRAD

The DNA will be here soon enough,
so don't say or do anything that
might backfire.

Deadra leaves the viewing room and joins Juan. She has the
lab report.

Juan is happy to see her.

JUAN

Hello Agent Ramirez, are we going
to be accepted?

DEADRA

No. I am afraid I have bad news.
Camila is pregnant.

She shows him that portion of the lab report. Juan looks
away, his faced strained.

JUAN

I guess you think we only want
asylum so she can have the baby in
America?

DEADRA

I could give a shit about that.
What I want to know is how a
fourteen-year-old girl in your care
is pregnant.

JUAN

I don't know.

Deadra slaps his face hard enough to leave a red welt. She's
close enough for him to feel the anger in her breath.

DEADRA

However it happened, you will be
charged with rape of a minor, lying
to government agents, and whatever
else I can think of.

Juan rubs the sting out of his face.

JUAN

I did not do any of those terrible
things. She is my niece. I am
trying to protect her by getting
her to America.

DEADRA

Well, now that you are being charged, you'll both be deported. Although, you may spend time in prison, first.

Juan starts crying.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

Start telling me the truth. It is your only hope.

JUAN

I am telling you the truth.

DEADRA

(fishing)

Camila told me you are not her uncle.

Juan pulls himself together. He wipes his nose on his sleeve.

JUAN

Okay, okay. Look, she doesn't know. I wasn't around the family.

Deadra crosses her arms.

JUAN (CONT'D)

I'm a coyote.

DEADRA

That, I believe.

JUAN

They don't want anything to do with me, so I stay in the shadows.

Deadra is not buying it.

JUAN (CONT'D)

They asked me only because they knew I'm a good coyote...until now.

She leaves.

Juan slouches by the weight of her words.

IN THE HALLWAY

Brad grabs her by the arm.

BRAD
What the hell was that? You call
that reasonable?

DEADRA
Reasonable enough.

BRAD
I'll have to write you up.

She pulls a pen from her pocket and hands it to him.

EXT. DETENTION CENTER GROUNDS - DAY

Deadra and Camila walk the sidewalk of the building. Traffic
streams by on the road.

DEADRA
So, we got some of your bloodwork
back.

A large truck ROARS by.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
Everything's normal, well, except,
for one thing.

A border patrol vehicle goes by, lights flashing.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
Camila, the labs indicate that
you're pregnant.

Camila stops walking.

She takes a quick step out into traffic.

Deadra SNATCHES her back onto the sidewalk.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
Jesus!

Deadra wraps her arms around Camila.

Camila starts crying. The gates of her emotions burst open.
Her body goes limp, but Deadra holds her up.

EXT. EL PASO FIRE STATION 11 - NIGHT

Deadra pulls up to the fire station, parks, and gets out of
her car with a plastic container.

INT. STATION 11 - NIGHT

Deadra walks past the four bays containing shiny fire trucks and enters the break room.

A dozen men sit around an oblong table having spaghetti and salad.

DEADRA
Hey fellas, I brought cookies.

FIREMEN
Deadra!

Everyone is happy to see her and her cookies.

Erik gets up and greets his wife.

ERIK
Settle down guys, those cookies are for me.

They go back out to the firetrucks.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

DEADRA
Yeah. I just needed to see you for a few minutes.

ERIK
I'm glad you came by. It's been a slow night, how was your day?

DEADRA
I had to tell a 14-year-old girl that she was pregnant.

ERIK
Oh. How did that go?

DEADRA
Like you'd expect. Still, she opened up to us a little more.

The door opens and in walk two paramedics. BEATRIZ, 23, and YVONNE, 24, a younger version of Deadra.

YVONNE
Hey Erik, did you save us any dinner?

ERIK

Yeah, everyone's still eating.

As they get closer, they notice Deadra.

YVONNE

Oh, sorry. I didn't know you were in the middle of something.

ERIK

This is my wife, Deadra. She brought us all cookies -- they are the best.

YVONNE

Oh, hi, I'm Yvonne and this is Beatriz, we just rotated down from station 24. We drive the meat wagon.

The girls stop just long enough for Deadra to say hello back, then they head into the break room.

DEADRA

Are you sure they're old enough to drive?

They both laugh and Erik gives his wife a kiss.

INT. DEADRA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Deadra lays awake and alone in her bed. She rolls to her side and looks at her wedding picture on the night stand.

INSET: She and Erik as young as those two paramedics.

FLASH: Yvonne's smile approaching Erik. It dropping when she sees Deadra.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. MAKESHIFT CHILDCARE ROOM - DAY

Deadra is picking her way through the crowded room of kids, carrying an arm full of case files.

Alice catches her eyes from across the room by waving an EXPRESS envelope in the air.

INT. NURSES STATION - DAY

Deadra and Alice open the envelope and review the contents. It's the DNA results for Camila and Juan.

ALICE

Well, they're not related.

DEADRA

(scanning the report)

And, he's not the father of the baby.

Deadra's brow wrinkles.

ALICE

So, they've been lying.

DEADRA

Juan has been, for sure. Camila hasn't said much.

ALICE

I'm actually relieved they're not related and he's not the father of her child, aren't you?

DEADRA

(slapping the file down)

Yeah. I mean, I guess so. It's just all so awful. If he was the pedophile...

ALICE

Now you're back to square one.

DEADRA

We may never find her real family.

ALICE

He must know.

DEADRA

Yeah, Brad won't let me near him again.

INT. DETENTION CENTER MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Deadra sits across the table from Juan.

JUAN

Does your boss know about this?

Deadra doesn't take the bait. She slides the lab report, the DNA report, and the paternity report over to Juan.

DEADRA

Not her uncle. Not the father.

Juan avoids eye contact.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

That makes you a liar. A child-trafficker. A monster.

Juan dismisses her with a wave - "you're ridiculous."

She slides two photos across the table. A Mexican MOTHER and DAUGHTER.

Juan's eyes widen, but just for a second. Deadra notices.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

That's right. Your wife and daughter. For real.

JUAN

I do not know them.

DEADRA

We do.

Juan is still chill.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

We're going to reach out to the Mexican authorities -
(she looks at her nails)
and have them inform your wife that you've been caught at the border -
(looks back at Juan)
with a 14-year-old pregnant girl.

It's a bluff - the authorities are corrupt and would inform the Cartel on him AND his family.

Juan picks up the photo of his daughter. Then the one of his wife.

JUAN

You have to leave them out of this.
No calls to anyone. To call is -

DEADRA

- to kill. Do you really believe
that?

Juan puts the photos down.

JUAN

Yes. Do we have a deal?

Deadra gathers up the photos and reports and stands to leave.

DEADRA

I can't make a deal. It would
depend on what you tell me.

She places her hand on the door knob.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

But, we can keep your family safe.
That I can promise.

She opens the door and gives him one last look.

JUAN

Please. Sit.

Deadra pauses, then takes a seat.

Juan shuffles around and leans forward on the table.

JUAN (CONT'D)

I'm just a simple coyote. However,
my client is very powerful and
important.

His hands shakes as he speaks. He notices and puts them under
the table.

JUAN (CONT'D)

I cannot go home without proof that
I got Camila to America safely.

DEADRA

Who is your client?

JUAN

There are lots of people in the middle, so we never know for sure.

Deadra pushes back in her chair as if to leave.

JUAN (CONT'D)

But, we talk to one another. The Cartel provides girls to officials. An Asian lady fixes them up and teaches them how to act.

Deadra stays in her seat.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Sometimes she has to move the girls out of the country.

Juan stops talking and Deadra doesn't start.

JUAN (CONT'D)

That's all I know. The rest will have to come from Camila.

Deadra pulls the photos of his family back out and looks at them.

DEADRA

I need more. Which cartel? What kind of officials?

JUAN

The Sinaloa Cartel provides girls to all kinds of politicians in Mexico.

(he rubs his eyes)

I got Camila from Miss Kim near the U.S. Embassy.

Deadra leans back in disbelief.

DEADRA

Miss Kim?

JUAN

The Asian lady.

DEADRA

So, let me get this straight. You're telling me that Miss Kim runs underaged girls in and out of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City?

JUAN

That's what I know. All I know.

DEADRA

You mean you don't know about the video surveillance at the Embassy? And all the Marines providing security?

Juan just stares at her.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

I check the video, you, Miss Kim, and Camila will come waltzing out and drive off? What day?

Juan's eyes light up, his hands open like a burst in Deadra's face.

JUAN

Miss Kim is a ghost. She won't be on any videos. We're not stupid, either, *pendejo*.

DEADRA

Oh, is that right?

JUAN

Cars come and go. Maintenance, contractors, caterers. Video cuts in and out. It's not so difficult.

DEADRA

Well, I think your bullshit cuts in and out.

JUAN

You are a person of color. Ask yourself, can those in power not find a way to fool the powerless?

Deadra reads his face. No tells. No ticks.

Shit.

She slides the photos to him, then leaves.

INT. DETENTION CENTER

Deadra writes on a clipboard, looks at her watch, fills in the time, turns into an officer sitting behind a desk.

He doesn't even look up.

Deadra surveys the room - too many people, too much noise - until she sees Camila.

DEADRA
Camila, come on, you're with me.

Camila is slow to move.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
Let's go, we don't have much time.

Camila walks over, faster than zombie speed, but not by much.

Deadra takes her hand, looks up at the security camera, and walks out the front door.

I/E. DEADRA'S CAR - LATER

Looking official in uniform, Deadra wheels her car out of the detention center's parking lot. Camila sits beside her.

She waves at the guard shack, the gate lifts, no problem.

CAMILA
Where are we going?

They head down the road.

DEADRA
Well, technically, it's my lunch break.

CAMILA
We usually eat together in the lunchroom.

DEADRA
Yeah, I had a tough morning and needed some fresh air.

Camila looks out the window - not a great part of town - outdated strip malls pocked with struggling businesses.

Carnicerias, taco shops, nail studios, liquor stores, then blue sky and sun.

Camila tips her head back to feel the sun on her face.

She smiles.

CAMILA
Are you supposed to have me out here?

Deadra looks over and sees one-fourth of the smile on Camila's face.

DEADRA
Looks like you needed some fresh
air, too.

CAMILA
I didn't think so.

Her head tipped further back in the sun.

CAMILA (CONT'D)
Thank you.

For the first time all day, Deadra smiles, too.

INT. ICE CREAM SHOP - LATER

Deadra and Camila both work ice cream treats in waffle cones. The red plastic booth swallows them in a modicum of privacy.

CAMILA
Oh my God, this is so good.

DEADRA
Right?

Camila chases drips down the side of her cone.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
You better hurry!

Camila laughs and knocks her cone into Deadra's.

It bumps Deadra's nose into the ice cream.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
Oh! Now look what you've done.

She wipes her nose, then takes a big bite from her dessert.

Camila follows the leader, taking her own big bite.

Too big. It's messy.

Deadra laughs and hands her a stack of really narrow napkins.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
Can I take your picture?

CAMILA
Sure.

Deadra uses her phone. Camila pretends to hide behind the cone then peeks around and sticks out her tongue.

Deadra looks at the shot.

INSET: Camila with her tongue out, looking happy, normal.

They enjoy the cold sugary treats and get the ice cream to below the top of the cone.

Deadra's smile fades.

Camila notices.

DEADRA
We have to talk.

Camila takes the first bite of her waffle cone.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
The DNA results came back and
you're not related to Juan.

Deadra studies Camila's reaction. It's slight, a half-second pause in eating her cone.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
He's also not the father of your
baby, which believe it or not, is
good news.

Nom, nom, nom, Camila's cone is gone.

Deadra reaches for her hand. Camila doesn't pull back.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
I need you to tell me what
happened. We can't reunite you with
Juan. We have to unravel your
mystery.

CAMILA
I should have known there was a
catch.

DEADRA
Me wanting to help you is not a
trick. But, you have to help me
know what to do next.

Camila tears up and dabs at her eyes.

CAMILA
I don't know how to help.

DEADRA

Tell me your story. You can skip over some of the details. But, we need to know who has abused you.

CAMILA

I can't. I don't think I can say it. Not the name.

DEADRA

We have to know who to protect you from, your parents, a town.

FLASHBACK - back to the teaser - the old truck barrels down on the kids.

CAMILA (V.O.)

They hunted us down like rats in the street.

She's caught by one of the men and has a burlap sack placed over her head.

CAMILA (V.O.)

Nobody would help us.

The old lady turns her back and closes the door.

CAMILA (V.O.)

At some point I stopped screaming and just laid in the floor of the truck.

Inside a locker room - steam hides the bodies of the girls - how many? A dozen, maybe more.

CAMILA (V.O.)

It felt like a community center, but we were the only ones there.

Older Latinas apply make-up and blow dry hair overseen by a stern Asian lady.

CAMILA (V.O.)

Except for Miss Kim and her valets. That's what she called them.

All dressed, they have dinner at a long, well set table.

CAMILA (V.O.)

It went from terror to a weird dream, like maybe I was lucky.

The girls stand single file in line outside a door.

The door opens, a girl walks out. Miss Kim gestures for the next girl in line, Camila, to come in.

CAMILA (V.O.)

Until we met with Miss Kim and she told us what our new job was and how it was an honor to be of service to very important men.

Camila is back in front of the large doors from the opening. They open and reveal a bed.

She steps across the threshold.

END FLASHBACK.

Back in the ice cream shop, Camila stares ahead glassy-eyed.

Deadra wipes her eyes.

CAMILA

I don't know his name. He said I should call him...

(takes a deep breath)

I can't say it. Miss Kim said he was a diplomat.

DEADRA

Do you think you would recognize his face?

CAMILA

I see it every time I close my eyes.

She looks Deadra in the eyes and absently wipes her mouth with a tiny napkin.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

I/E. DEADRA'S CAR - LATER

Deadra and Camila are back in the car. The turn signal BLINKS as Deadra waits to turn left across traffic back into the Detention Center.

DEADRA

Thanks for opening up today Camila.

A break in traffic - Deadra guns it, darts across the road, then has to break hard at the guard shack.

CAMILA

I don't know what good it will do.
He'll come for me.

The gate automatically opens.

DEADRA

We'll figure something out. Trust
me.

She whips into a parking spot.

INT. BORDERLINE BREW PUB - NIGHT

Alice and Deadra sit in a booth at brew pub with big silver vats and sacks of barley behind a plexiglass wall.

Each has a frozen monster margarita in front of them.

DEADRA

I don't know what to believe.

ALICE

Trust your gut.

DEADRA

Do you really think sex rings exist
for politicians and the uber rich?

ALICE

Not until now...it's pretty out
there.

DEADRA

I'll have to bring Brad in the loop
tomorrow.

ALICE

This will scare the bejezus out of him. He'll shut you down.

DEADRA

That's what I'm afraid of, but I have to tell him.

She take a big gulp of her drink.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

Ow! Brain freeze!

ALICE

Hold your thumb to the roof of your mouth, like this.

Alice demonstrates.

Deadra tries it.

ALICE (CONT'D)

The heat of your thumb warms that spot and the pain goes away.

Deadra closes her eyes and appears to suck her thumb.

It's over quick.

DEADRA

Damn, that white voodoo works.

She takes a slower sip.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

I stopped by the firestation the other night to drop off cookies.

ALICE

That was sweet.

DEADRA

I know, those guys love my cookies. But here's the thing. Two new, young, and hot paramedics dropped in for dinner.

ALICE

Oh, really? How nice.

DEADRA

They didn't see me at first, so they gave a flirty shout out to Erik.

ALICE
No they didn't.

DEADRA
Then stopped dead in their tracks
when they saw me.

ALICE
What was Erik like?

DEADRA
He was chill, introduced me, they
sashayed on in for the spaghetti.

ALICE
So, you think something's up?

DEADRA
To everyone there, this was a
normal, every night thing...but
Erik has never mentioned them
before.

ALICE
It's nothing.

DEADRA
I'm overthinking it, right?

ALICE
You know Erik loves you. Trust your
gut.

Alice lifts Deadra's hand and kisses it.

INT. DETENTION CENTER MEETING ROOM - DAY

Deadra and Juan are in the conference room reviewing
paperwork on a clipboard.

JUAN
I told you, I can't go back without
proof Camila is in America.

Deadra hands him a photo - it's Camila from the ice cream
store.

DEADRA
This will have to do.
(turns the clipboard to
him)
Sign here and say, "thank you."

JUAN

Thank you? You're sending me back to Mexico and want me to say thank you?

DEADRA

We can prosecute you on child trafficking, illegal entry, kidnapping, child endangerment, should I go on?

OFFICER WONDOLOWSKI, a huge, bald wrecking ball, walks in with a clear bag of Juan's stuff, including a cell phone.

DEADRA (CONT'D)

If we catch you again, things won't turn out well. Find a new career.

Juan tries his phone. It's dead.

JUAN

Can I charge my -

DEADRA (CONT'D)

- Officer Wondo will drop you in Juarez.

Deadra walks out, leaving Juan holding his phone and charging cord.

Juan turns to Wondo. Wondo doesn't give a shit.

INT. DEADRA'S OFFICE - DAY

Deadra has a laptop hooked up to two thin monitors.

She looks at one monitor, three rows of three photos, staff directory of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City.

Then the other monitor, an online newspaper with a

HEADLINE: BILLIONAIRE CHARGED WITH SEX TRAFFICKING.

Deadra reads the byline and zooms in on a photo of ELLIOTT JEFFERS, the smug billionaire.

INSERT: Jeffers is at a political fundraiser. Behind him is a visual match to one of the photos on the first screen.

She looks back and zooms the first screen -

INSERT - TONY EARL, a U.S. Diplomat to Mexico.

DEADRA
(to herself)
My money is on you, you creepy
looking bastard.

EXT. QUIXOTE CAFE, JUAREZ - DAY

A rough, tan-on-darker-tan strip mall in Mexico. The sun radiates.

Juan paces out front, smoking a cigarette and holding a paper cup of coffee.

A white panel van with García Plomero painted on the side pulls in and slowly approaches Juan.

It stops and the passenger's side window rolls down.

Juan sees two dangerous men in the cab. The PASSENGER motions him over.

Juan moves like a sloth, hands him his phone.

INSERT: THE PHOTO OF CAMILA AT THE ICE CREAM SHOP.

The passenger smiles and nods, slaps the side of the van twice, and motions Juan to the back.

Juan walks to the back where TWO MEN stand with the rear doors open.

When Juan reaches the door he freezes - MISS KIM'S DEAD BODY lays inside - the men shove him in and the van pulls off, nice and easy.

INT. DETENTION CENTER MEETING ROOM - DAY

Deadra, Sandy, Alice, and Camila sit around the conference table.

Deadra deals out eight-by-ten glossy photos of men and women from the U.S. Embassy in Mexico.

One...Two...Three...Four...

Camila starts sobbing.

Alice and Sandy comfort her.

DEADRA
Is he the one?

INSET: THE PHOTO OF TONY EARL.

DEADRA (CONT'D)
His name is Tony Earl.

SANDY
(to Camila)
Let's get you out of here and to a
place you can rest.

As they leave, Deadra knocks on the one-way mirror.

Brad comes in from the viewing room.

BRAD
Shit.

DEADRA
What's our next step?

Brad's face drops. He looks worn out and rubs his eyes.

BRAD
I don't know. Keep her in the
system. Has she decided about the
baby?

ALICE
(sliding Earl's photo)
I think she means what do we do
next for this sick P-O-S?

BRAD
Listen, this is a career killer...
maybe worse. We don't have enough
to go after him, and as soon as we
do, he will hammer us.

DEADRA
So we're as powerless in this world
as Camila?

BRAD
In this scenario...yes.

ALICE
That's unacceptable. How many
others do you think there are in
this kind of ring? What about them?

BRAD
We have to focus on the good we can
do for Camila. It's our only play
here.

ALICE

You mean we can't just call out a diplomat on the word of an illegal alien.

BRAD

He'll make the whole thing unravel, use his connections to investigate our office, then put the screws to us until...just take care of Camila, that's all I'm saying.

DEADRA

We got a tag on Juan.

ALICE

And DNA we might tie to Earl.

Brad's face turns purple in a flash of anger.

BRAD

What do you mean, you have a tag on Juan?

DEADRA

I processed the paperwork and deported him.

BRAD

Unbelievable! That's not exactly how we do things here, Deadra! You should have consulted me, dammit.

DEADRA

His story checked out, he's just a coyote with no criminal record, we turn them back all the time.

ALICE

She's right.

DEADRA

He might lead us to another piece of this puzzle.

BRAD

You've done your part with Camila, leave her to the system now.

Brad slams his hand down on the table and leaves in a huff.

EXT. ISOLATED DESERTED AREA IN MEXICO - DAY

The white plumber's van is parked in the middle of nowhere.

Miss Kim's body is laid out flat in the dirt. She didn't die easy.

Juan is on his knees next to her, also having suffered a beating. His eyes are swollen shut and his head dangles like a ripe apple on a weak limb.

One of the MEN is on a satellite phone.

MAN

She's in custody at the El Paso detention center. He said he didn't tell them anything, didn't know names or details to tell.

The Man turns and gives a SECOND MAN the thumbs up gesture.

BANG! The loud and sharp retort of a COLT .45 reverberates across the empty plain.

Juan falls onto Miss Kim.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND A STRIP MALL - NIGHT

The backdoor to a restaurant lets a triangle of light into an otherwise blue-black dark alley.

An older LATINO MAN in an apron steps in and out of the light.

He's talking MOS to someone in the shadow.

He throws his arms up and shakes his head no while shifting his weight from foot-to-foot.

He turns and walks toward the door...stops...turns back...shakes his head no again...then extends his hand.

As the other hand reaches into the light, DEADRA's face comes out of the darkness.

INT. BRAD'S OFFICE - DAY

In a tiny grey-on-grey government office space. Brad dwarfs the desk he sits behind. He's finishing a call.

BRAD

Okay then, yeah, we'll have her ready. No, everyone will be relieved to have a relative picking her up.

Brad hangs up and stands to find Deadra.

INT. DETENTION CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Deadra visits with a group of young children, they're showing her artwork they completed.

Deadra catches the eye of Brad as he walks over.

DEADRA

*Keep drawing my little artists, I
have to talk to my boss.*

They take one step away from the din of chaos.

BRAD

I just got a call from someone at
the State Department asking me to
get Camila ready for release.

DEADRA

What? How can that be?

BRAD

It was a long call, but an American
relative was contacted by Camila's
parents. They asked her to check
all the detention centers for
Camila.

DEADRA

And you think a Latino-American
citizen has the juice to do that?
To just call up the State
Department and have them do a
search?

Brad absorbs the anger behind the question.

BRAD

No, but, when the State Department
calls, knows more about Camila than
we do, and has all the paperwork
lined up so we can release a
detainee into the custody of a
citizen, we do as directed, clear?

Deadra's pointer finger springs out and gets uncomfortably close.

DEADRA

Can you sleep at night knowing you're probably turning a teenage girl back over to her abuser? And, that's if he doesn't just have her killed.

BRAD

I'm not the bad guy here. I didn't kidnap her, I didn't put her in the sex trade, I didn't sneak her across the border.

Deadra retracts her finger, but she's so mad her face vibrates.

BRAD (CONT'D)

I took her in, cleaned her up, cured her disease, fed her, housed her, got her counseling, and will now release her to a relative at the order of the State Department. So yeah, I sleep fine at night.

DEADRA

Tell that to the bags under your eyes.

Deadra storms out of the room.

Kids swarm Brad and he forces a smile and excitement to interact with them.

EXT. FIRESTATION - NIGHT

It's after ten. Erik and Deadra lean against their car, Erik holds the cookies Deadra brought over.

ERIK

This is not like you, are you sure nothing's wrong?

DEADRA

Just what I told you about at work. It helps me sleep if I can see you after an emotional day.

ERIK

Do you really think Max is a good babysitter?

DEADRA

I had Alice come over. She's
waiting there with a glass of wine
for me.

She kisses Erik and he gives her a strong hug.

ERIK

Just two more days and I'll rotate
home. We'll make up for lost time.

She gets in her car. Erik watches her pull away.

YVONNE (O.S.)

Everything all right?

Erik turns and walks back toward the fire hall, Yvonne at the
door.

INT. DETENTION CENTER, CAMILA'S ROOM - LATER

Camila sleeps in darkness. Her door opens and Deadra comes in
and wakes her.

Deadra is not in uniform. She wears black jeans and a black
hoodie.

DEADRA

Camila, we have to go. It's not
safe for you here anymore.

CAMILA

What?

Deadra hands her a matching black hoodie.

DEADRA

Put this on, quick, we have to go.

Camila panics and starts moving fast.

CAMILA

Is he here, now?

DEADRA

No, relax, but stay fast. I think
he's coming tomorrow.

CAMILA

What are we doing?

DEADRA

I have a plan.

A door in the hallway SQUEAKS open, and a flashlight beam cuts through the darkness.

A GUARD walks down the hallway, making his rounds. He finds Camila's door open and shines his flashlight into the room.

Camila is in her bed, turned away from the door. Everything else is in order.

The guard closes the door and moves on.

Deadra rolls out from under the bed, grabs a fully dressed Camila and goes to the door.

The door at the other end of the hallway CLICKS closed.

They move out.

I/E. BACKSIDE OF DETENTION CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Deadra's car is parked in the back near a service door. The door barely opens, Deadra peeks out and looks around. It's clear.

She puts Camila in the back seat under a blanket.

THE GUARD SHACK

The guard shack is unmanned at this hour.

The pressure plate opens the gate when Deadra's car rolls over it.

The video camera follows her car through.

EXT. DARK TRAILER PARK - CONTINUOUS

Deadra's car pulls into the trailer park and kills its lights.

She drives to the back lane, turns right and goes to the end.

Deadra and Camila get out and meet an elderly LATINA.

She hands Camila a passport, state ID card, and a birth certificate while pushing her in the front seat of a pickup truck.

Deadra leans in and gives her a hug and a kiss.

DEADRA

These people will take you into the
arms of America where you will
disappear.

CAMILA

I won't see you again, will I?

Deadra shuts the door and the truck takes off.

Tears suddenly overtake Deadra. She doubles over, then finds
her way to her car.

DEADRA

(to herself)

God forgive me, I just trafficked
my first child.

She gets behind the wheel and looks at herself in the
rearview mirror.

INT. DEADRA'S GARAGE - LATER

Deadra has a selection of manila case files spread out on the
hood of her car.

She runs some of Camila's case files through a shredder.

On one page, she writes SUSPECTED RUNAWAY FROM DETENTION
CENTER.

She picks up a new file.

INSERT: DANTÉ VARGAS, 15-YEAR OLD DRUG MULE.

She examines his photo and an x-ray of a heroin balloon in
his lower intestines.

She checks her watch, 3:00 A.M.

DEADRA

(to herself)

Time for bed, tough day at work
tomorrow.

The light turns out.

INT. POSH HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

The doors to Conference Room A are already closed. Pop-up
trade show banners announce the event -

INTERNATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE TO END CHILD TRAFFICKING.

INSIDE -

The Conference Room is packed with round tables, ornate center pieces, and all the evidence of a fine dinner nearing its end - service staff bus tables and deliver desserts.

Ten people per table make small talk. The ambient noise is similar to the noise in the detention center, though somehow more refined.

Tony Earl sits at a table up front near the stage. An AIDE comes in and makes a beeline for him.

SOUND CUTS OUT. She whispers in his ear. We can't hear what she says, but we can read her lips: SHE. GOT. AWAY.

He BLINKS hard and SLAMS his linen napkin on the table.

SOUND COMES BACK.

EARL turns to look at the MAN behind the podium.

MAN

Ladies and gentlemen, please give a
Texas welcome to our keynote
speaker, Tony Earl.

APPLAUSE accompanies Earl to the podium. Like a good politician, Earl flashes a huge smile and holds his hand up to quieten the crowd.

FADE OUT.