

THE SUN ALWAYS SETS IN TEXAS

"Pilot"

Written by
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EXT. CHISOS MOUNTAIN RANGE - WEST TEXAS - DAWN

We open on distant peaks, fencing off morning light. The voice we'll come to know as Sheriff Ellis Reid rings in:

ELLIS (V.O.)
I first came to Alpine in 1964.
Remember my dad saying, "It ain't
the end of the world... but you can
see it from here."

EXT. WEST TEXAS DESERT - MORNING

Darkness loosens over miles of cracked caliche. Shallow wind sings through, kicking up dust.

ELLIS (V.O.)
'Course he said lots of things.
Before he passed, he told me the
Reaper sat next to him at a tavern.
After some time, he worked up the
courage to glance down at his
ledger, and whose name does he see?

EXT. ABANDONED FARM - DAY

The remains of a collapsed homestead. A windmill harmlessly swings by.

ELLIS (V.O.)
S'how I remember it, anyway.
Though my wife's quick to suggest
my memory ain't been good for a
while now, and I know better than
to say different.

EXT. HIGHWAY 118 - LATE AFTERNOON

An empty two-lane, shimmering in the heat.

ELLIS (V.O.)
Hear about these people who revise
things in a way, after a while they
believe that's how it really
happened. Wish I had that ability.

EXT. FIELD - DUSK

A listing fence, tracts of buffelgrass behind it.

ELLIS (V.O.)
 Vietnam, this time we fell in.
 Everyone returnin' fire. Before I
 knew what I was doin', I'd cut an'
 run. Couldn't tell you why.

EXT. DESOLATE DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

A Ford F-150 powers along, shown beneath a moon-flooded sky.
 The V.O. culminates:

ELLIS (V.O.)
 S'about the only part I remember
 now. Some might call that
 purgatory. Be surprised, that's
 what it ended up being... Didn't
 expect it to be this quiet.

INT. F-150 - CONTINUOUS

Headlights stretch over the country road. The only sound is
 of the truck's suspension, SHUDDERING over the terrain.

QUINTIN COLE (30s) sits in the passenger seat, SHOTGUN laid
 across his lap. Discharged from "Blackwater," a cross
 dangles from his neck.

KIKÉ ESTÉS (early 20s, Mexican) drives. Wheel held in one
 hand, he shakes out a cigarette with the other.

KIKÉ
 (offering)
 Smoke?

Quintin shakes his head.

KIKÉ (CONT'D)
 They really don't have shit for
 radio here. You notice that?
 Chihuahua, up in the hills, it
 don't matter. Bad Bunny always
 find a way through.

QUINTIN
 Kill the lights.

KIKÉ
 What, you gonna walk outside with a
 head lamp or something?

QUINTIN
 We're coming to it. I remember.

Kiké twists off the headlights.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

As the truck creeps ahead, cresting a ridge, we see into the valley below. A CABIN sits at the base, emanating light.

KIKÉ

Damn. They left me with a real fuckin' bloodhound.

Kiké cuts the engine.

KIKÉ (CONT'D)

So what? You ask for directions, I light him up?

QUINTIN

(loading shells into
shotgun)

You wait, keep silent.

KIKÉ

What are you talking about, man?
This's a two-man job.

QUINTIN

When I finish, you help clean up.

KIKÉ

You serious?

(silence, then, resigned)

Shit, fine. You want me to pick
the bones? That's fine. I'll find
something on the radio.

As Quintin slides out of the truck, he hesitates for a moment, as if listening to a voice only he can hear - a bicameral mind.

KIKÉ (CONT'D)

Forget something?

Without responding, Quintin descends on the cabin.

INT. CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

MONTY WILKES, 70, lounges in a recliner, watching TV. After a beat:

QUINTIN (O.S.)

Any news?

Monty, startled, gets to his feet--

QUINTIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
No no. You're good there. You
sit.

Monty slumps back down. We PAN SLIGHTLY TO REVEAL Quintin's
blurry figure in b.g., training his shotgun.

MONTY
Mexicans send you?

QUINTIN
Think of it as God's providence.

MONTY
Yeah, and who was it that paid ya?
(then)
Look, you and I know what's fair.
I got bundles-- stacks of cash out
in the yard. How 'bout we go out
in the mornin', see what we find.

QUINTIN
That won't work.

The reality of his position starts to settle; Monty retreats
to supplication.

MONTY
Okay, look, you-- you take the
guns, take the money. You won't
hear from me no longer. I don't
want nothing to do with it.

QUINTIN
There's life after this.

MONTY
Bullshit.

QUINTIN
You can repent, or see what
happens.

MONTY
They'll bury you, too. Know that?
The Mexicans, they'll have ya in
the desert-- won't even pack in the
dirt.

QUINTIN
Is that all?

MONTY

Is that--?

(heavy sigh)

Well, you're so intent on doin'
this, whaddya bother talkin' to me
for?

QUINTIN

You prefer it silent?

MONTY

I prefer this never to've happened.

QUINTIN

It's fate that brought us here.

MONTY

Yeah, then why don't you put your
shotgun down? See what fate
thinks?

A beat. Then, as Monty jerks around--

-- BANG! He keels over, splattered with bird shots.

Quintin comes into focus, smoking shotgun in hand.

INT. GARAGE - MINUTES LATER

Fluorescent-lit. Replete with guns, ammo, machinery. The door has been pulled open, showing us the truck outside.

Kiké cradles an armful of pistols. When he gets to the truck, he approaches the front-passenger wheel. He peels the frame to the wheel well, dumps the pistols into a hidden compartment within.

KIKÉ

Did he go out with a draw?

Quintin ignores him, stacks up boxes of ammunition.

KIKÉ (CONT'D)

Huh? Hear me, güey? You gotta
give him a draw at least.

Kiké gathers another armful of magazine clips.

KIKÉ (CONT'D)

That's the feeling. That one right
there. Where it could go either
way. That shit matters to me.

Kiké heads back into the night.

Quintin notices a frayed corner of a nearby rug beneath a bulky gun-drill. He shifts the machine a few inches. Stoops, lifts the rug, revealing a trap door. He shoulders the machine further, then flips open the hatch. Within, there is a fleet of AK-47s, MP5s, and a Barrett M82 Sniper Rifle.

Kiké sidles up.

KIKÉ (CONT'D)
 (re: guns)
 Shit, man. All that fit in the
 saddle?

EXT. CABIN - LATER

Early sunlight tilts over the horizon.

As Quintin shuts the pickup gate, Kiké drags Monty's corpse out from the garage.

KIKÉ
 We gotta start having 'em dig their
 graves first, man. We're gonna
 need more than a shovel.

QUINTIN
 Let him kindle the flames.

Kiké stops tugging, looks up.

KIKÉ
 I'm gonna hang him out like the
 sign to a truck stop.

QUINTIN
 You didn't hear me?

KIKÉ
 This shit's nothing without a
 signal, man. That's how we handle
 things.

Quintin nods toward the brimming red sky.

QUINTIN
 See that? God's commission.

Kiké SIGHS, relenting.

KIKÉ
 (re: gas can by feet)
 And what about the can? He got a
 plan for that, too?

Quintin climbs into the truck. Kiké shakes his head, **TOSSES**
 the can onto the corpse's chest.

KIKÉ (CONT'D)
 (to corpse; in Spanish)
*A souvenir, pendejo. Case you get
 thirsty.*

Kiké lights a cigarette. Tosses the match onto the floor,
 where we see puddles of gasoline. Within seconds, the garage
 is ablaze.

WHITE TEXT flares over the incendiary scene:

"THE SUN ALWAYS SETS IN TEXAS"

INT. BREWSTER COUNTY POLICE STATION - MORNING

Sleepy and wood-paneled - the cells double as utility
 closets. In walks BILLY CONTRERAS (22), Mexican-American,
 donning a fresh white Stetson. He stops in an office
 doorway, where a distraught SHERIFF ELLIS REID (70s) rifles
 through his desk.

ELLIS
 (noticing Billy)
 You my deputy? Ramirez?

BILLY
 Contreras.

ELLIS
 I'll admit, I didn't really read
 the text.

Billy smiles, offers a handshake.

BILLY
 Thanks for taking me on, Sheriff.
 Really.

Ellis scrutinizes Billy's outfit, ending with his hat--

ELLIS
 Where'd you work before? Boot
 Barn? Finishing up your shift?

BILLY
 (chagrined, doffing hat)
 They told me all cops in West Texas
 wear these.

ELLIS
 No no. Gotta leave it now. Won't
 recognize you without it.

Billy reluctantly puts it back on, brim sat low.

ELLIS (CONT'D)
 People in Dallas raised ya on their
 shoulders. You like A&M or UT?

BILLY
 What do you mean? Like, the
 academics?

ELLIS
 You said you're from Texas?

BILLY
 Yes, sir. Second generation.

ELLIS
 Yeah?

Ellis downs the rest of his coffee.

ELLIS (CONT'D)
 Well... not this part of Texas.
 (standing)
 Come on, I'll show you through
 town.

INT. SHERIFF'S TRUCK - DAY

Ellis drives, leading a tour along Highway 90. Billy packs a
 Zyn in the passenger seat.

ELLIS
 Don't you know that's bad for ya?

As Ellis says this, he CRACKS a Lone Star and takes a SWIG.

ELLIS (CONT'D)
 So what made you sign on here for?
 Most people, your schooling, make
 eighty grand a year for changing a
 water cooler.

BILLY

People are always saying there's a problem at the border. Then they move on to the sports page.

ELLIS

Border patrol's always looking for workers.

BILLY

I don't wanna stuff kids in cages, man. I'm interested in the collateral. The communities, you know?

ELLIS

We don't see hardly any of that activity.

BILLY

For now. But with all the fentanyl -- you see all the military and shit they got stationed in El Paso now? Plus, I like the West Texas justice. Iron on your hip, all that. When evil comes, people just want to see it strung up. They don't bother asking who brought the rope.

ELLIS

You may be in the wrong decade, son.

BILLY

What do you mostly get on patrol then? What should I look out for?

ELLIS

(considers)

Mmm, last week Joel Cromer called, said he thought Charlie Lawrence was cheatin' in their bridge game at the VFW. Wanted me to come in, take a look.

BILLY

Did you?

ELLIS

Nope. I play in that bridge game. And sometimes, I'm the one who's cheatin'.

Billy smirks, then notices something up ahead.

BILLY
You get a lotta strays out here?

Ellis follows his sightline - a senile YELLOW LAB plods along the road.

ELLIS
I know that dog.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Ellis pulls onto the shoulder, alights. The PANTING lab hobbles over.

BILLY
Is there an address on the collar?

ELLIS
(without checking)
Probably. Be in trouble if we need it, though. Seeing as this dog belongs to me.

Ellis scoops up the dog. As he carries him toward the bed:

BILLY
He hopped the fence or something?

ELLIS
Wife calls, that's the story.

Now unseen, Billy rubs a handful of dirt onto his pristine cowboy hat, making it look worn-in.

INT. F-150 - DAY

The truck mounts a curb into a diner parking lot, rousting Quintin awake.

QUINTIN
Why are we off the highway?

KIKÉ
Don't know about you, I need to eat.

INT. DINER - LATER

Kiké dumps hot sauce onto his omelette. Quintin has two pieces of bacon in front of him, one hard-boiled egg.

KIKÉ

You gotta be kidding me with that order, man. "Tom and Jerry" special... You probably don't know what that is either. No TV for you, no. Born at age thirty, rifle on your shoulder.

As Kiké eats, something catches his eye O.S.:

In the parking lot, a group of MEN admire a souped-up FORD RAPTOR, clearly belonging to the alpha. One of them smacks the side of the cab; the owner knocks his hat off.

KIKÉ (CONT'D)

(to Quintin)

You sit tight, güey, huh? I gotta go check in with the boss.

Kiké slides out of the booth. Quintin eats for a beat, then:

WAITRESS (O.S.)

Can I bring anything else for ya?

Quintin looks up at the WAITRESS (early 20s). After an uncomfortable beat:

QUINTIN

That's fine.

WAITRESS

Is everything alright with it?

QUINTIN

What happened?

She cowers a little. We NOTICE caked-on makeup fights to conceal a bruise beneath her right eye.

WAITRESS

Oh, well I was-- someone in back swung out when I was walkin' by. It gets crowded there, in back.

QUINTIN

Why do that?

WAITRESS

Sorry?

QUINTIN

Lying. It's not good. Makes everything else seem hollow.

She drops her head, abashed.

WAITRESS

S'not polite to talk about these things, anyhow. I mean, I don't even know ya. Y'all just passing through?

Quintin tracks her sightline to the parking lot. He watches as Kiké surreptitiously slips a few items to the truck-revering men.

QUINTIN

(to waitress, looking out window)

I go where they tell me. Aleppo, Caracas, Zaire. Rain beating down -- that's what I remember. Now the weather's clear, but there's still men who need killing.

A delayed CHUCKLE, like maybe it was a joke she missed.

WAITRESS

I know a few of them. They sit up at the bar on Thursdays.

QUINTIN

Why do you do this?

WAITRESS

Need money, don't ya?

QUINTIN

That's not it.

WAITRESS

It ain't?

QUINTIN

People here, they're buried in troubles. Then they come, and they see--

(off name tag)

-- Carol. And know, if only for an hour, at least there's a familiar face. But me? I see nothing but wounds in a humble place.

She tilts her head to hide the bruise.

QUINTIN (CONT'D)

So what can I do, but deliver these men to God, so that they may hear his voice, the same as me.

WAITRESS

(creeped out)

I-- well, I got other tables to check on. Let me know if you need anything else.

The waitress scurries away.

OUTSIDE

Money exchanges hands. Kiké gives the men a salute, then heads back in. Quintin returns to his breakfast, having tracked the encounter.

AT THE TABLE

KIKÉ

You ready, bandito?

Quintin nods. The waitress dispenses the check as she hustles past.

KIKÉ (CONT'D)

What's with her? You say some weird shit or what?

Quintin wipes his hands, rises, and exits, ignoring the check.