

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 father 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 down next to him at a
tavern. Finally 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. Though, my
wife suggests 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.

EXT. FIELD - DUSK

A listing fence, tracts of buffelgrass behind it.

ELLIS (V.O.)
Out in the Gulf, 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. Guess some might call that
purgatory. Maybe. If it is what
they say, 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?

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, man. They left me with a
real bloodhound, didn't they?

Kiké cuts the engine.

KIKÉ (CONT'D)
So what now? 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)
What, you forget something or what?

Without responding, Quintin descends on the cabin. Kiké shakes his head.

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)

Ya know, look, I got bundles--
stacks of cash out in the yard.
How 'bout we go out, see what we find.

QUINTIN

What would you like? Romans?
Revelations?

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

Or you can repent, see what happens.

MONTY

Bullshit. Bullshit. They'll bury you, too, ya 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

I can make it silent.

MONTY

Christ.

Monty twists 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 go with the flames.

Kiké stops tugging, looks up.

KIKÉ
I'm gonna hang him out like a sign,
you know? Like 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.

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

KIKÉ
 (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 pauses 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 thoroughly.

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?

 BILLY
 (chagrined, doffing hat)
 They told me all cops in West Texas
 wore 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 an SMU fan, or--?

BILLY
What do you mean? Like, the
school?

ELLIS
You say 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.

ELLIS
Okay, then why here? They're
always looking for agents.

BILLY

Well, I'm interested in the communities around the border, you know? I don't wanna stuff kids in cages. Plus, I like the idea of West Texas justice. Iron on your hip, all that.

ELLIS

You may be in the wrong decade, partner.

BILLY

Well, what do you mostly get on patrol then?

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

What, 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.