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Entiérrenme

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Entiérrenme

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Abstract

Entiérrenme

by

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

SUPERVISOR: PJ Raval

This report is about my thesis film *Entiérrenme* that in English translates to “Bury Me.” In the following pages I do a recounting of the entire process for completing this piece from its conception, writing, pre-production, production and postproduction. The report begins with an introduction that explains the genesis of *Entiérrenme*: Why I started getting interested in the subject and how I decided to write it. It also speaks about the circumstances that led me to put the project on hold for over one year, how I returned to it and what happened after that. After that it continues to address every one of the stages of production (pre, pro and post) in the form of a diary. It finally concludes with a reflection on what these years at the University of Texas at Austin have meant for me as a filmmaker and future educator.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1. Pre-production.....	6
Chapter 2. Production.....	11
Day One	11
Day Two	12
Day Three	13
Day Four.....	14
Day Five.....	15
Day Six	16
Day Seven	17
Day Eight.....	17
Chapter 3. Postproduction.....	19
Conclusion	22
Appendix	24
<i>Appendix 1: Working Script.....</i>	<i>24</i>
References	52

Introduction

I first thought of making *Entiérrenme* when I read about the case of a group of Mexican and Central American immigrants who were ambushed by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at a Panda Express in Phoenix Arizona. The fast Chinese food restaurant had been hiring undocumented immigrants for many years but had recently decided to collaborate with ICE to have them arrested and finally deported. I was shocked by such a machiavelian gesture: both ICE and Panda Express waited for four months before they arrested everyone at the branch. So people worked there without knowing that a trap was being set up for them. After that I decided to read about immigrant issues in Arizona. I had heard before about Arizona's conservatism and race issues so I wasn't surprised that the immigrant experience was harsher there than in other states inside the US. However, I was shocked about how institutionalized discriminatory activities against undocumented immigrants are in Arizona. For example, in most states around the country the police are not allowed to ask someone for their immigration documents unless they have committed a crime. However, in states like Arizona it is not only permitted but encouraged by the law. After finding out about this, I decided to look into what happens in Texas. It turns out that Texas is now one of the states that does not allow police officers to randomly ask people for their immigration documents. However, a traffic violation is enough for them to do it, so at the end of the day it does happens very often. For this reason, most immigrants live their lives in constant fear and threat.

Something else I discovered is that fear amongst the Latino community is not limited to these police practices and to only undocumented immigrants. Many people of color who come from Latin America and either hold permanent residency or are US citizens are also subjected to constant harassment from the police and if it happens that they are stopped by an officer and do not have a way of identifying themselves (because they have forgotten their wallets at home, lost their driver's license, etc.) they are sometimes taken to jail because authorities assume that they are undocumented. This, of course, confirms the racial nature of the issue.

I imagined what would it be like if someone who was undocumented had an accident at their house and died. How would their family react and what would the outcome of this reaction be. My first thought was that they would try to make the body disappear in order to save themselves from deportation. Then I thought about what would that entail morally and emotionally for a traditional Mexican family who practiced catholicism and in which funerals and mourning rituals are so important. With this in mind I wrote the first version of the script called *Bury Me in the Dark*. I wrote this first script in the Summer of 2013 thinking this would be my pre-thesis. I began pre-production on that script in September and most of October 2014. I was supposed to have renewed a grant from the Mexican National Fund of Culture and Arts (FONCA) that I had gotten on my first year of studies, but for budgetary reasons they did not renew it to more than half of their grantees. I got very nervous at that point because I did not know if I was even going to be able to keep going to school. I almost immediately knew that I had to call off *Bury Me in the Dark* and think of something much cheaper to produce. My

wife and I had planned a trip to Mexico since the summer so I knew I was going to be there for about a month. At that point I was watching the films of Nicolás Pereda, a Mexican director whose work began to have a huge influence on me. He directed a short documentary called *Interview with the Earth*, which I had recently watched and couldn't take off of my mind. The film follows two brothers in rural Mexico whose best friend dies when falling off a mountain cliff in front of their eyes. They recount the day of the accident in a way that you do not know if what you are watching is actually a fiction instead of a real story. Throughout the whole film, Pereda reflects on the documentary form and challenges its adherence to reality. Around that time I also came across Nathan Duncan's *ASH* and Natalia Almada's *All Water Has Perfect Memory*, an experimental documentary about the premature death of Almada's older sister. She died by drowning in their house pool when Almada was just four years old. Natalia gave her mother, father and brother each a tape recorder and asked them to recount both their memories from when her sister was alive and the details of the accident. For the visuals, she uses her family's archival footage and constructs a portrait of a sister she does not remember. Thinking about these three films was how the idea for *The Solitude of Memory* came to me. However, in order to be able to make a distinct film, I set my own rules for it and executed almost every shot within a strict formal confinement.

When I came back for the Spring semester in January 2014 I found out that I was eligible to apply for a Jesse H. Jones Fellowship. Winning this award meant getting all of my thesis's year paid for and a stipend. Since I had already written *Bury Me in the Dark* and done a lot of pre-production for it, I had all the materials to apply for the fellowship. I

did and, luckily, I got it. The award was not only a huge economic help, but a sort of moral uplifting. I was still feeling very affected by what had happened with FONCA so the Jesse H. Jones became emotional fuel for the editing stage of *The Solitude of Memory*.

Three months later, I finished my pre-thesis and traveled to South Korea and Japan for two months to be the cinematographer for Matt Koshmrl's thesis film *Dokdo*. When I came back from the trip, *The Solitude of Memory* began receiving invitations to play at film festivals. This was a big surprise and also a big encouragement for me to continue making the type of films that I wanted to make, as well as being something that kept me much busier than I thought I was going to be. Therefore, managing my pre-thesis agenda and working on my thesis film became extremely demanding, especially because I was completely inexperienced on the festival circuit.

On the Fall 2014 Semester I decided that to better inform my thesis film, I would explore the subject of the Mexican experience in the US through other disciplines. Therefore, I enrolled in Photojournalism and Social Anthropology (focused on theory of the everyday) classes. I found the experience vastly enriching – the courses allowed me to put time aside for investigating the world I wanted to portray and also gave me insight on how it could be explore in disciplines other than film.

In parallel to such classes, I was writing the script. The toughest part of the writing process was that the story needed to be explanatory to a certain degree – because the issue is so specific to a certain community – while maintaining the subtleties of an

effective dramatic piece. Finding this balance was hard and even though I think I did not achieve it completely until post-production, being open to improvisation during production was key to making “exposition” seem natural and believing. During the writing process I tried many different versions and I think I never got it quite right. One thing that was also crucial was to continue pre-production even if the script had not been finished yet.

The process of writing the story and doing pre-production at the same time resulted in a crucial asset for the type of film I was hoping to make. This meant that instead of forcing locations and looking for certain places at all cost, I was able to adapt the scenes of the movie to the spaces that I was finding along the way. This made my process a lot more organic and helped me obtain at least a glimpse of the “reality” that I wanted to implement in the piece. The same was true in terms of the talent: I was able to determine certain specific scenes I needed because I already knew who the main actress would be and what I could count on her to be able to do. I had seen most of Teresa Sanchez’s work done for film before, so I had a good idea of what she was capable of in most scenes. For example, the scene at the bathroom when she is remembering the hot springs at Lázaro Cárdenas was one that I got a lot of feedback about, and it was basically advocating for me to eliminate it. Now that I look at it, I find it one of the most interesting scenes in the film and one that could’ve not been achieved without solid acting. This leads me to the first chapter of this report: pre-production.

Chapter 1. Pre-production

Pre-production for *Entiérrenme* officially began in the Fall 2014 semester. However, it wasn't until the end of the semester that things really started happening for us. The main reason was that I was still writing the script by that point and, Jason Outenreath, my then main producer, was working on his pre-thesis film. Because I knew that it was going to be almost impossible for Jason to focus on our pre-production, I reached out to two people that ended up becoming crucial for this project: José Chávez and Makena Buchanan. José is a Mexican deacon that is involved with many churches around the Austin area and an amateur actor. He found out about my project through a friend of his who met Alison Boland, one of my classmates in the MFA program, and contacted me two years ago. Since I did not produce the film then, I lost touch with him for more than a year. I called him again in 2014 and he was just as excited about helping me produce. Makena, on the other hand, is part of the RTF undergraduate program and had his first experience producing a short film when he worked with Jim Hickcox in *Slow Creep*, Jim's thesis film. I had spoken to Jim about Makena and he mentioned his experience working with him had been wonderful. I then contacted Makena, we got together, and he agreed to be the film's co-producer. However, his work quickly became extremely important for the project, so it was clear since very early on that we needed to offer him a shared producer credit. A side note is that Makena did not join the project until late November / early December. Before that, my pre-production work had been almost

entirely about going around Austin to Mexican restaurants, bars, churches and houses to meet people and tell them about the project.

By the end of the Fall 2014 semester I was writing three different versions of the script. This began to make me extremely anxious. Reflecting back upon it, I believe that the nature of my indecision had to do with a constant struggle I have with narration. I many times wonder if it has to do with the fact that I do not fully believe in it, that I feel like it is too restrictive, or that I am afraid of it. And by afraid of it I mean that I never know if my skills as a writer will be good enough to write a “good” story (whatever that is) and then be able to fully capture it on cinema, on a movie. However, I get the feeling more and more that I have overcome this fear by discovering that cinema is not fixed and can take many forms.

Let me go back to the pre-production process.

During the first weeks of December I decided to begin casting even though I did not have a locked script. It actually became crucial for me to be able to know who would play Alejandra in order to finish writing it. The first two weeks of December I held auditions in Austin, and Teresa did the same in Morelia. Yamel Thompson – the actress who plays Alejandra – happened to help in one of these sessions and I did a casting with her just to see what she could do – I am a big believer that sometimes people that have never acted can give solid performances just by being who they are. The audition with Yamel went very well and I sent it to Teresa to see what she thought. We agreed that it was necessary to do another audition that was more challenging for her. We did it and it worked even better. I showed it to Teresa, she agreed with me that Yamel was good for

the part and thus I decided to cast her – that was around December 10. I then traveled to Mexico with only my two main characters locked. Locations and key crew positions were yet to be defined. While in Mexico, I spent most of my time writing the script.

I stayed in Mexico for a little over three weeks. I dedicated two of those weeks to writing what became a very close version of the final script. Once back in Austin, I focused on finishing the script, doing pre-production and crowd funding. Another reason that I enjoyed working with Makena is that he was diligent enough to work with two different versions of the script. So we were doing pre-production thinking about several possibilities for the ending, and other scenes in the script that I still wasn't sure if I wanted to shoot or not. That made my experience a lot less stressful.

Like I mentioned before, another big part of this stage of the process was our crowdfunding campaign. It was a very simple one, but since we launched it right after *The Solitude of Memory* won Best Short Documentary at Slamdance the campaign actually attracted many people. It didn't go overboard but we obtained around 130% of what we had established to raise. By that time we had already found our main location. It was actually José Chávez who was responsible for making it happen. He introduced me to someone from Hidalgo, Mexico who has been living in Austin for decades and who owns a small trailer house in Elroy. Elroy is in Del Valle, Texas, by the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. It has become a Mexican neighborhood. We went to see the house and decided to rent it from him for an entire month – this allowed for just enough time to dress the house due to everyone's tight schedule. We looked for different cars everywhere because originally I was thinking that the family would own a Chevrolet

Blazer or a Ford Explorer from the eighties or early nineties. We were often very close to getting one of these, but something always ended up going wrong: either the paperwork wasn't right, the car didn't fully work, etc. Finally we decided to use Tom Rosenberg's (a classmate) car.

Teresa arrived from Mexico to Austin four days before we began shooting. Having her here that time was crucial for me to feel confident about what we were doing. She was also incredibly helpful at coaching Yamel. They had so much chemistry from the moment they met and that just made everything work so much smoother. We had three rehearsal sessions before the shoot. They went well, but it wasn't until the actual production that both Tere and Yamel began to really understand their characters and commit to them. This also had to do with my inexperience in directing actors and directing fiction in general. I wasn't really sure how much emotion I wanted from them and I myself hadn't really understood their characters. Now, I feel I know them so well I probably would be able to write a two-hour film for them. We picked up equipment on Thursday February 26 and prepared for our first shooting day: Friday, February 26, 2015.

Before I delve into the production process day by day, I would like to explain that I set very specific rules for the whole film, and we basically followed them all the way through. I talked to Jim and we decided we were going to try to shoot everything with wide and medium shots, and have two or three very specific close ups. However, another rule that kind of cancelled the previous rule was that we were going to adapt ourselves to every situation we were at. This meant that if we were at a location we did not entirely like, we were going to modify the framing instead of altering the location through

production design. That's actually how we designed some of the driving scenes. I did not like the outside of the house too much, so we decided not to show it when Teresa and Alejandra arrived from the station and when Alejandra came back from the store. Then, instead of moving things around, we modified the frame so that all we could see was the sky. This principle also translated to the way we used focal length. It is true that we mainly stayed on lenses that ranged from 24mm to 50mm, however there were moments where we would use a 70mm or a 100mm to keep off frame things we thought would be distracting or give information we did not want to reveal. Being in the car was interesting because even for the two shot of Alejandra and Miriam driving we had to accommodate our focal length, and it was because the camera and tripod were so big that we had to use a very wide lens in order to even see half of their faces.

The same goes for lighting. I told Jim from the beginning that I wanted the least artificial lighting possible – I think there is actually no artificial lighting at all in the shots that made it to the final cut – and have mainly one light source all throughout the shoot. I also wanted to push the camera as much as possible. Cameras now are sort of ridiculous in that sense. Especially Sony cameras are extremely sensitive to light so you can shoot scenes like the one in the bedroom that was only lit by a few candles. So, I wanted to see how much we could push that and try to make it as noisy as possible so that it would be clear that we were shooting with a digital camera that tries to simulate film. Anyways, I am stating this now because this pretty much was a norm all throughout the film and I might not address it in the everyday description of the process.

Chapter 2. Production

Day One

I woke up at 5:30am, took a shower and got ready to leave. I checked my emails almost as a reflex expecting there would be nothing important to see. However, right there, before heading to my first day of shoot, I found the invitation for *The Solitude of Memory* to play at the Critic's Week in the Cannes Film Festival.

Thinking back on it I know it of course had no relation with the work I was doing at the moment but I felt it was a good augury for our new film.

I drove to the location and Makena was already there. That felt good, I felt that I was in good hands. This day was actually kind of strange. I felt really good about what we achieved, however, things actually were oscillating between being great and terrible within minutes because by the middle of the shoot we realized we were missing essential equipment to keep going. At the end someone drove back to Austin and we got everything we needed soon enough.

Going back to the shoot, we shot "all" the garage scenes that day. I put this in quotation marks because we actually ended up reshooting most (except two) of that day's scenes -- this reshooting situation actually repeated itself several times or, better said, for several scenes, which was interesting for me regarding my process as a director. It is something that I really want to keep in mind for the future. Basically, I realized that it became very important for me to experience every location and try different things before getting the shots I wanted. We ended

up reshooting so many shots because I was realizing along the way that I was discovering new corners in every space each time we shot something there. I guess that my lesson for the future is that I should spend much more time of pre-production on locations so that I can get to *know* them sufficiently. In addition, I realized the huge distance between how you imagine things are going to look and how they really look. That's why I insist on the word *discovery*, because no matter how much pre-production I made, I actually discovered the shots while being on set, filming things I did not like, and finally trying different frames until what I thought was the most interesting appeared in front of me, on the monitor.

Day Two

Another big mistake on my part was agreeing to shoot one of the film's most important scenes on day two: the table scene. I feel that almost everything in this scene could be so much better. The production design was extremely uneven: Teresa's background looks so beautiful with the altar and the window, while Yamel's is so flat that it became very problematic to edit the scene together -- impossible, I would say. We did so many shots in that space that were thrown out that it makes me angry.

One thing that I had a lot of trouble figuring out in that scene was establishing the emotional beats and how intense I wanted them to play out. Looking back at the entire process I can say with certainty that I failed almost

completely in that part. I held back for the fear of appearing melodramatic. I am sure now that I should have been more open to raw emotions and I should have pushed them to express their character's despair in more scenes. I feel now that if I had been more intelligent in the way I directed the camera when Yamel had to give difficult performances, I would have gotten truly beautiful moments with her. Anyway, this is one of the biggest things I learned during this process.

Something else that happened on this scene was that I had imagined a very complicated shot that would help us transition in time. Thus, the scene would go, without cutting, from Miriam (Teresa) talking about the table to the kitchen shot where she is screaming at Luis. We set up a very complicated dolly shot that each time resulted in around nine minutes long, which of course made it impossible to use -- actually, it was not only because it was too long but because it just didn't work. Therefore, we re-shot the scene in the kitchen trying something very simple in terms of camera techniques, focusing instead on achieving one or two shots that could have complex compositions. Even before I began editing I knew that I was going to use these new shots and would throw the dolly away.

Day Three

Day three had more variety and even if a few of the things we shot did not work, it was a very productive day. In fact, we shot two of the scenes that I find more interesting visually: Miriam finding Luis inside the garage, and Miriam crying in

front of the crucifix. With regards to the first scene I just mentioned, Teresa's performance was a big surprise for everyone. We had not talked about it at all. I had not given her any directions and she just went for her own interpretation of it. We started rolling, she approached the camera and when she reacted to Luis being dead we all just began looking at each other in awe. I was not expecting that at all, but of course I asked her to repeat it exactly on that same way just asking her that at some point she stayed down on the floor so that we could hear her without seeing her.

Another surprising moment was when we shot the close up for César's phone call. We did that one later that day and apparently Teresa had had such a good time on set that by that point she was unable to cry, at least that is what she told me. I was happy and confused at the same time -- actually, I felt that way most of the shoot because I began to wonder if having such an affable set could have been detrimental for the film. I do not mean this because Teresa was unable to cry at that point -- we reshot the scene two days later and she was perfect -- but because I felt that too many "little" mistakes were happening during the shoot because people were having always a good time.

Day Four

This was a tough day. We finished late. We shot the scene at the bus station: we had shot everything there and when we were about to leave, I realized that I wasn't

happy with our principal set up, the moment when Miriam picks up Alejandra. It was a front shot to Yamel and Teresa drove in the shot by the right side. It was a beautiful shot, but it felt plain to me. We were shooting with a 70mm lens and that indeed made it more interesting because it's a shot that you would normally think to shoot with a wider lens. However, there was something about the shot being too clean that I did not like. We were about to leave and I asked Makena, who besides being the main producer also worked as the Assistant Director, if I could have ten more minutes. He agreed and I started looking around. I suddenly saw a small brick fence near where Yamel was standing and I thought that if I used a 100mm lens I could make that fence look as if it were a wall and have it in the foreground while the action happened in the background. We did it and it ended up working much better than the one we had done before.

That day we also shot a good portion of the car scenes. We stayed mainly on a two shot from the back seat (the one we used) and repeated the same lines for about two hours. The best moments in this scene were when they would finish their lines and I would not cut so they had to improvise. That gesture from Miriam to Alejandra when she says "Are you sleepy?" looks completely natural because it was not scripted, it came out just like that, the same Yamel's reaction.

Day Five

After two days of rest, day five began. I had a conversation with Professor Lalitha Gopalan in one of those free days that changed the entire shoot from then on. When we discussed the story, she mentioned a photo show she had seen recently that mainly featured undocumented construction workers. The unique aspect about the photographs, she said, was the fact that we only saw the workers' shadows on the pavement or the walls. We kept talking about this and then began to discuss the idea of never seeing Luis's face during the entire film. The issue with that was that we had actually already shoot all the scenes with Abel, who played Luis. However, because we had been working so fast we were able to reshoot all of what we had done with him.

Day Six

This was the day we began shifting our schedule to shoot mainly night scenes. Surprisingly, it was not an issue for anyone and we were able to keep a good pace. The most important scene we shot was Miriam singing at night. My ideal for this scene had always been to light it using only candles. We assumed this was going to be impossible so we tried to design a lighting setup that would combine candles and artificial lighting. We spent two or three hours doing this and it never looked right. We finally decided to turn all of the lights off and shot it what with was available from the candles. The image that we got out of this constantly makes me wonder what will become of digital cameras in the near future. It also makes me

think about what cinematographic images mean now that cameras' capacities are being taken to the extreme.

Day Seven

Day seven was possibly the most important for me. We shot the river scene. The call time was three in the morning because we were planning on shooting an alternative ending first. This alternative ending was going to entail that Alejandra and Miriam left the body on the street and waited until morning for the police to find him and have the city bury him. We were able to do a shot with them leaving the body on the street, however, we never had time to do the rest because we had to be already down at the river. While we were waiting for the sun to come up I asked Jim to find a place where we could frame a shot where we could see it (the sun). We did it and that's how the idea for the scene where they drag the body across the frame came to us.

Day Eight

This was the final day of production and was basically a reshoot day. As I was looking through the footage from the garage scenes we shot on the first day, I realized that most of it was not working. We had used a tiny nail gun that did not feel threatening at all and, to my taste, the frames that we had picked were not interesting. Therefore, we decided to go inside the garage again, bring a bigger

nail gun look for a frame, set it, and just reshoot everything on that same frame, which ended up making it into the final cut.

Something interesting happened this day. In the script, the whole idea of Luis being in danger was constructed in a very complicated way. It was written that the compressor would jam, he would walk over, take a look at it and finally we would hear a bang and a body falling to the ground. Instead of showing that I decided to use a scene that happened spontaneously. While Abel, the actor who plays Luis, was nailing the pieces of wood the gun actually jammed. We cut and he began trying to fix it. I immediately saw that and asked everyone to keep filming without him knowing.

Chapter 3. Postproduction

The editing process has been definitely the most interesting for me, also, the hardest. A long time passed before I was able to begin editing this film. At least three months. I don't know if this was good or bad but that's how it happened. I began keeping notes in the beginning of June. I want to transcribe the first one:

06/05/2015

I lost my registration. I did not pay my Summer tuition on time. The film: there is an irreparable narrative void. Only fragments.

After that comment there is a three-page sketch of how the order of each scene should be and although it is very similar structurally to what I have right now, many scenes disappeared from that first idea. At the end of that day this is what the notebook says: "Petition to myself: Less internet, please. Where does emotion live? Inside the soul of the ingenuous."

The latter basically reflects my process and my state of mind for the entire month of June. In order to solve this anxiety, I decided that I was going to treat the piece as if every scene was independent from each other. Here is another entry:

08/08/2015

Observe everything as fragments. Am I going to use chapters again?

The way I did this in the timeline was very simple. I separated every “moment” with black and thought about it not as a movie that would be playing at a theatre but as a multi-channel projection inside a black box that would be looping. With this in mind, I started putting together *pieces* of the film. This was actually the worst time I had with the editing because I basically thought I wasn’t going anywhere. I was confused about what I wanted to do with the footage and I was procrastinating so much that I began feeling I was not going to be able to finish the film by August. It is actually silly to say this because one would have to be able to edit a short film in a month without a problem. However, I was also working part-time and doing a bunch of other things related to my pre-thesis.

July came. Here is the first entry:

07/01/2015

A long wait. I am so late. More anxiety. Today begins my work at home. I am having a computer shipped to my apartment. I am alone.

My most intense work started at this point. I edited most of the film during this month. At the beginning I was just trying to make sense of all the footage in my head. To organize it for myself. Therefore, everything took a sort of a monotonous rhythm. I don’t know if it was because I wanted it that way or because I felt the need to linger in every shot for as long as possible in order to make sense of its meaning. I had almost eight cuts to black in that first version. I was actually thinking that I was going to make a ten

chapter short film. I liked the idea but it did not happen -- I might make a ten chapter short film some day.

So I kept editing like that for a week and then showed what I had to Daniel Perera, a friend of mine from Guatemala who does visual anthropology. He liked it but he thought I was leaving all the emotional content out of the film and I was rushing myself to the part where they are figuring out what to do with Luis's body. When he said that, I thought I was in huge trouble and for a long time felt that I had no way to solve this. However, I realized that by insisting on the waiting the characters gained a lot of emotion. Once I fixed that, I had a meeting with Don Howard, and we watched what I had edited so far. By that point I had a thirty-seven minute cut that had to be cut down at least to twenty-nine so that I could add credits and still be within the rules of the thirty minute cut. Don watched the film and I can say now that the feedback I received from him gave me was truly enlightening. I am sure that I wouldn't have been able to arrive to this cut without it. It did not have anything to do with narrative. It was all about rhythm. Rhythm as an instrument of meaning.

Now that I am in the last stages of this process I realize that probably the most important thing -- if there is ever one -- that I learnt in this three-year process is the importance of editing. How fundamental editing is for making a film. How much a film can be completely created through editing and how irrelevant the camera becomes once you sit on the editing room. It is a beautiful and encouraging thought for me to think that as a filmmaker one has such a tool, a tool that has actually its own form and that it is its own art.

Conclusion

The process of making this film was probably much longer than what it should have been. I enjoyed it deeply although I also found myself realizing over and over again mistakes I made along the way. “Filmmaking is about progressively failing less,” says filmmaker Jake Mahaffy. However, I would say that it is actually about accepting the fact that failure and success will happen intermittently in one’s work.

I am grateful for the experience I have gained with *Entiérrenme*, especially through the formal experiments I executed: working so intensively with the off screen space, wide shots that are essentially tight and claustrophobic, improvisation and the mix of high contrast with flat lighting (examples: kitchen scenes, bathroom scene). Thinking about the impulse of making *Entiérrenme* in such a way, I have discovered that my current preoccupations are much more centered in reflecting upon the artifices of moviemaking than in classical ideals of representation and storytelling.

One of the most significant things I took away from this process was the possibility of working with Teresa Sánchez. Both professionally and personally, I discovered in her a spirit unlike any other person I have met. The love and commitment she puts into her work is absolute and contagious. I hope I can continue working with her in the future and see my work increasingly affected by her talent.

While editing *Entiérrenme* I have reflected upon the projects that I would like to pursue next. At the moment I am working on getting funding for a long version of *The Solitude of Memory* which I hope will be my first feature film. In parallel, I plan to begin writing a fiction feature script for which I would like to collaborate with a writer.

I would like to conclude with a brief comment about my time as a student at the University of Texas at Austin. I was working in advertising -- directing commercials, specifically -- when I applied to this MFA program. Naively, I believed that I understood the cinematic language in a high degree. However, it was not until I delved into the craft of filmmaking that I realized there was so much more to be learned and explored. I am now sure that I would not have had this realization if I had not attended the program. Thus I will be forever grateful with my professors and classmates, all of whom have allowed me to gain from their knowledge both technically and conceptually. If my career ever achieves some level of success it will be because of the generosity of everyone around me who has instructed and influenced me deeply.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Working Script

As an appendix I am attaching my working script. This version of the script was not written thinking about plot; however, it does hold a certain order that relates to the events that occur in the story. You will read here a number of extra scenes and different versions of scenes that we set up to shoot but did not necessarily make it into the final piece.

BURY ME IN THE DARK

Written by

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02/09/2015

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1

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

1

A Mexican house in Del Valle, Texas—a suburb of Austin. MIRIAM (47) and ALEJANDRA (23) sit together at the kitchen table. Their eyes swollen, they have been crying.

Miriam leans her head and chest over the table and says

MIRIAM
Él solo hizo esta mesa...
Cortó la madera, la talló, la
armó y luego le echó
barniz...

MIRIAM
He built this table
himself... Chopped the wood,
carved it, put the pieces
together and varnished it...

She caresses it.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Quince años comimos juntos
aquí.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
We ate together here for
fifteen years.

Alejandra stares at her.

A beat.

Miriam leans back up.

MIRIAM
(Looking at Alejandra)
¿Qué vamos a hacer, hija?

MIRIAM
What are we going to do,
hija?

ALEJANDRA
No sé, pero no podemos seguir
esperando.

ALEJANDRA
I don't know but we can't
wait any longer.

CUT TO:

2

INT. KITCHEN / HOUSE - EARLIER THAT DAY

2

(O.S.): We hear the sound of an AIR COMPRESSOR and then a nailer triggering intermittently.

The table is set, a pot of carne con chile a pot of beans and a another one of rice, boil over the stove. Miriam enters the frame and stands in the middle of the kitchen holding a pair of earrings on one hand and her purse in the other.

MIRIAM
(While she puts one of the
earrings on)
¡Luis!

Luis doesn't answer... She walks to the stove. Turns down the fire.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
¡Luis!

The sound stops.

LUIS

¡Ueep!

[Miriam] puts the other earring on, the sound goes off again, and she shakes her head.

MIRIAM

¡Ya me voy!

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

I'm leaving now!

The sound stops.

LUIS (CONT'D)

¿Mande?

LUIS (CONT'D)

Sorry?

MIRIAM

¡Voy a recoger a Alejandra de la estación!

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

I'm going to pick up Alejandra from the station!

LUIS (CONT'D)

¡Ok!

MIRIAM

¡No me tardo! ¡Dejé prendida la estufa para que le des una checada al rato..!

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

I won't take long! I left the stove on, please check it in bit!

Luis doesn't answer.

MIRIAM

¡¿Me oíste?!

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Did you hear what I said?!

LUIS (CONT'D)

¡Sí!

LUIS

Yes!

MIRIAM

¡Bueno, nos vemos en un ratito!

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Ok, see you in a little while!

LUIS (CONT'D)

¡Sí!, inos vemos!

LUIS (CONT'D)

Yes! See you!

Miriam leaves the frame. We hear the door of the house open then close, Miriam's car turns on and leaves.

A long beat.

Luis (50), wearing working goggles, a worn out T-shirt, sweatpants and boots, walks into the kitchen towards the stove, grabs a big spoon, shakes the stew with it, fills the tip, blows on it and tastes it.

He washes the spoon and leaves it to dry; walks over to a drawer, opens it, grabs a pack of cigarettes, opens the window and lights one.

[Luis] takes a few puffs, opens the water of the sink and wets the burning tip. Throws the cigarette into the trash and walks out of frame.

A long beat.

The noise commences again.

3 INT. GARAGE - DAY

3

A messy garage. A few religious figures scattered around. Luis is making a wooden desk. He works carefully.

He is about to ensemble one of the legs to the table section:

With a tape measurer he calculates the correct distance for the nail, marks it, grabs a nail pistol, sets it over the mark and pulls the trigger. CLAP - the sound of the nail going through the door.

Next one: measures, marks, prepares the pistol, pulls the trigger. CLAP.

Miriam appears at the threshold.

MIRIAM
Viejo, te estoy hablando.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Luis, did you hear me calling you?

Luis acts surprised.

LUIS
¿Eh?

LUIS
Sorry?

[Luis] takes off his glasses.

MIRIAM
Te estoy hablando.

MIRIAM
I was calling you.

LUIS
Perdón, no escuche.

LUIS (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I couldn't hear.

MIRIAM
Ya me voy.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
I'm leaving now.

LUIS
Está bueno... No te acompaño para avanzarle a esto a ver si termino hoy.

LUIS (CONT'D)
Ok... I'll stay here to see if I can get ahead on this and finish today, is that ok?

MIRIAM
Sí, está bien. Sirve que le das una vuelta a la carne y los frijoles para que no se quemem.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Yes, that's ok. Please check the stove in about then minutes.

LUIS

Ok.

Luis shows her what he is working on.

LUIS (CONT'D)
¿Está quedando bonito no?

LUIS
It's pretty right?

Miriam smiles.

MIRIAM
Sí, está bonito.

MIRIAM
Yes, it's pretty.

They look at each other...

MIRIAM
Bueno, ya me voy. Ahorita regreso.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Ok, I'm off. I'll be right back.

LUIS (CONT'D)
Sale, te vas con cuidado.

LUIS
Ok, be careful.

Miriam walks away.

Luis resumes his work.

4 I/E. CAR / HOUSE - DAY

4

Miriam turns on the car and drives off.

5 INT. GARAGE - PARALLEL

5

Luis takes a different leg of the desk. Sets it in the right place, prepares another nail but as soon as he is about to pull the trigger, the compressor dies.

He frowns, takes off his gloves, removes his glasses and walks to the power switch.

[Luis] unplugs the power cord and examines it... Plugs the cord back in, nothing.

He finds another switch, plugs the cord and the compressor switches on again.

As he is walking back to his working table a jamming sound starts coming out of the compressor. Luis notices it and bends down to check what's wrong. He taps on it a few times.

6 EXT. ROAD BUS STATION - DAY

6

An improvised bus station in central Austin. People with suitcases wait for someone to pick them up. Alejandra (19) is amongst them.

5.

Miriam pulls over, Alejandra recognizes the car and walks toward it. She puts her suitcase on the back seat and gets in the passenger's seat.

7 I/E. CAR - CONTINUOUS 7

Miriam and Alejandra hug.

MIRIAM
Hola hija.

ALEJANDRA
Hola mamá.

They let go of each other. Alejandra buckles her seat-belt.

MIRIAM
¿Lista?

ALEJANDRA
Sí.

Miriam drives off.

8 INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER 8

Miriam drives, Alejandra rides on the front seat.

MIRIAM
¿Cómo te fue? MIRIAM
How was it?

ALEJANDRA
Bien. ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
Good.

MIRIAM
¿Te gustó? MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Did you like the place?

ALEJANDRA
Sí, está bien. ALEJANDRA
It's alright.

MIRIAM
¿Hiciste amigos? MIRIAM
Did you make friends?

Alejandra looks at her and her eyes frown.

ALEJANDRA
Mamá, fui un fin de semana. ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
Mom, I was there for one weekend.

MIRIAM
¿Y? MIRIAM
And?

Miriam looks at her.

ALEJANDRA
Ay mamá.

Miriam smiles.

A beat.

The go into the freeway.

MIRIAM
¿Te dijeron algo más de la beca?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Did they say anything about the scholarship?

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
No. Creo que avisan hasta abril.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
Not yet. I think they'll let us know in March.

MIRIAM
¿Los maestros no te dicen nada?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
The professors don't tell you anything?

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
No.

MIRIAM
¿Y tú no les has preguntado?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
And have you haven't asked them?

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
No. Si les preguntas se ofenden... Bueno, no se ofenden pero se supone que es "inapropiado."

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
No, if you ask they get offended... Well, not offended but it's supposed to be "inappropriate."

MIRIAM
Qué exagerados.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Wow, how sensitive...

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
(Se encoge de hombros)
Pues sí.

ALEJANDRA
I guess so.

Silence.

MIRIAM
¿Estás nerviosa?

MIRIAM
Are you nervous?

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
No... Bueno, un poco...

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
NO... Well, just a little...

Miriam grabs Alejandra's leg tenderly.

MIRIAM
Te va ir bien, vas a ver.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
You're going to do fine, you'll see.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
Pues a ver...

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
We'll see...

CUT TO:

9 INT. GARAGE - PARALLEL 9
Luis kneels in front of the compressor. He makes it work again. Stands up.

10 INT. CAR - PARALLEL 10
Miriam turns a corner slowly.

ALEJANDRA ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
¿No era allá atrás la vuelta? Didn't you have to turn back there?

Alejandra signals a previous corner. Miriam ends the turn.

MIRIAM MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Sí, pero por ese lado Yes, but there are a lot of últimamente hay mucho policia. police lately over there.

ALEJANDRA ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
Aaah. ¿Osea que ahora ya Aaah. Does that mean that now siempre rodeas. you have to take the long way every time?

MIRIAM MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Pues sí. Sort of.

ALEJANDRA ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
¿Tan feo está? Is it that dangerous?

MIRIAM MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Mh, mejor ni averiguar. I don't want to find out.

ALEJANDRA ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
Pues sí. Of course.

11 INT. GARAGE - PARALLEL 11
Luis takes the pistol and tries to nail again, it's jammed. He struggles with it, can't seem to get it to work.

12 INT. KITCHEN / HOUSE - PARALLEL 12
The kitchen is empty. The sound of the COMPRESSOR goes off again.

13 INT. CAR - PARALLEL 13
Miriam drives slower. They ride in silence now.

14 INT. KITCHEN / HOUSE - PARALLEL 14

The camera travels out: we gradually see other sections of the kitchen, the dining table, the living room...

Meanwhile, the sound coming from the garage (of the compressor) becomes louder, louder and louder, until we suddenly hear a BANG!! Things falling off of shelves, a POW!

LUIS *OFF*

Grrr!

Luis's body falling to the ground...

Silence.....

The camera stops at the entrance door.

A long pause.

The door opens. Miriam enters and walks to the kitchen.

Alejandra is coming in behind her but her phone rings, she takes it out of her bag pack and answers it.

ALEJANDRA

Hey! What's up? Wait let me move,
the signal here is terrible...

[Alejandra] steps out of the house and leaves the door ajar.

Miriam goes into Alejandra's room to leave her suitcase.

15 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 15

Miriam goes into the kitchen and sees the pot of *carne con chile* boiling and spilling out, almost burning.

MIRIAM

No, no, no, puede ser este menso.
Luis!!

She turns off the heater and puts the pot beside the sink. She sees the window open and closes it.

We hear Alejandra coming in the house and walking to her room.

16 INT. ALEJANDRA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS 16

Alejandra is inside her room, absorbed in her cellphone.

<p>MIRIAM</p> <p>Hija, voy a tener que ir a la tienda. Ve a saludar a tu papá, ándale. Y, por favor, en lo que estoy fuera, revisa que no se quemen los frijoles que de por sí la carne ya está toda reseca.</p>	<p>MIRIAM (CONT'D)</p> <p>Alejandra I'm going to have to go to the store. Go say hello to your father. And, please, check the beans so they don't burn because the meat is already dry.</p>
--	---

[Alejandra] nods but does not answer. Miriam stares at her.

MIRIAM
Alejandra... Alejandra!

[Alejandra] finishes texting and looks at Miriam.

<p>ALEJANDRA</p> <p>Yo voy.</p>	<p>ALEJANDRA</p> <p>I'll go.</p>
---------------------------------	----------------------------------

She throws her cellphone on her bed.

<p>MIRIAM (CONT'D)</p> <p>¿Qué?</p>	<p>MIRIAM (CONT'D)</p> <p>What?</p>
-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

<p>ALEJANDRA</p> <p>Yo voy a la tienda... Para que tú ya no salgas.</p>	<p>ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)</p> <p>I'll go to the store so that you don't have to.</p>
---	--

She grabs the car keys from her.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
(Frowns)
Ok.

<p>ALEJANDRA</p> <p>¿Qué compro?</p>	<p>ALEJANDRA</p> <p>What should I get?</p>
--------------------------------------	--

<p>MIRIAM (CONT'D)</p> <p>Limón, más cebolla y tres cocas.</p>	<p>MIRIAM (CONT'D)</p> <p>Lime, more onions and three cokes.</p>
--	--

ALEJANDRA
Ok.

<p>MIRIAM</p> <p>¿Te doy dinero?</p>	<p>MIRIAM (CONT'D)</p> <p>Do you need money?</p>
--------------------------------------	--

<p>ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)</p> <p>No, yo tengo.</p>	<p>ALEJANDRA</p> <p>No, I have enough.</p>
--	--

<p>MIRIAM</p> <p>Ok... ¿No vas a saludar a tu papá?</p>	<p>MIRIAM (CONT'D)</p> <p>Ok... You're not going to say hello to your father?</p>
---	---

<p>ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)</p> <p>Ahorita que vuelva.</p>	<p>ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)</p> <p>As soon as I get back.</p>
--	---

10.

Alejandra, almost running, leaves the house.

We hear the CAR turn on and drive off.

17 INT. KITCHEN - DAY 17

Miriam comes in the kitchen again. She places the pot of *carne con chile* over the heater that she turned off before.

She looks out the window.

18 EXT. HOUSE - DAY 18

Miriam walks to the garage.

19 INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS 19

MIRIAM (O.S.)

Luis!

Dust is still in the air. Luis lies motionless on the floor, his shirt filled with blood.

Miriam comes in, she does not notice Luis at a first glance and looks around surprised by the mess.

MIRIAM

Viejo, ¿Qué pasó?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Luis, what happened?

She finally sees Luis lying on the floor and freezes.

20 EXT. HOUSE - DAY 20

Miriam runs to the house.

21 INT. HALLWAY / HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER 21

Miriam, storms in and walks to her room. She grabs her cellphone and calls Alejandra. Her ring tone goes off inside the house. Miriam follows the sound and finds Alejandra's phone on her bed.

MIRIAM

¿Qué hago, qué hago, qué hago?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

What do I do, what do I do, what do I do?

CUT TO:

22 INT. MIRIAM'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 22

Miriam sits on her bed talking on the phone.

CÉSAR
 (Through the phone: lots
 of noise from the truck
 that he's driving. He's
 half screaming when he
 talks)
 Ay comadre, no me digas, no
 me digas...

Miriam interrupts him.

MIRIAM
 No sé qué hacer, César, ¿qué
 hago?

CÉSAR
 No le hables a nadie, a
 nadie.

MIRIAM
 Alejandra viene en camino,
 pobrecita que lo va a ver
 así.

CÉSAR
 Ahijo de su madre... No mira,
 yo, déjame hago unas llamadas
 y te hablo. Nomás tengo que
 pararme porque casi no se
 escucha nada manejando esta
 troca.

MIRIAM
 Ok.

CÉSAR
 Ando de chamba en Illinois,
 voy a volver a Texas hasta
 dentro de tres días.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
 Ok.

CÉSAR
 Pero yo ahorita investigo y
 te hablo. Pero no le hables a
 nadie... Ni a la ambulancia,
 ¿ok?... Acuérdate lo que le
 pasó a Mago.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
 Sí, sí.

CÉSAR
 Un abrazo comadre, le llamo
 más tarde.

CÉSAR (CONT'D)
 Ay comadre, that's
 terrible...

MIRIAM
 I don't know what to do
 César, what do I do?

CÉSAR (CONT'D)
 Don't call anyone, at all.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
 Alejandra is on her way, my
 poor baby she is going to
 have to see him like this.

CÉSAR (CONT'D)
 Son of a... Look Comadre, let
 me make some calls and I'll
 call you right back. I just
 have to stop because I can't
 hear anything driving this
 truck.

CÉSAR (CONT'D)
 I'm doing a job in Illinois
 and I will be back in Texas
 in three days.

CÉSAR (CONT'D)
 But I'll look into this and
 call you back. But don't call
 anyone... Not even the
 ambulance folks, ok?...
 Remember what happened to
 Mago.

CÉSAR
 A big hug comadre, I'll call
 you later.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)	MIRIAM (CONT'D)
(Cries louder)	Yes, the same to you!
Sí, sí, igualmente! Adiós...	Goodbye...

Miriam bursts out crying.

23 I/E. CONVENIENCE STORE / CAR - DAY 23

Alejandra walks out of a convenience store, gets into her car and drives off.

24 INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER 24

Miriam stands in the middle of the garage.

Looking almost hypnotized Miriam scans the place as if she is trying to make sense of what just happened.

[[DETAILS SHE STARES AT]]

25 I/E. CAR - DAY 25

Alejandra drives through small streets, she listens to music with ear plugs on.

She makes a turn.

[Alejandra] arrives to her house and sees Miriam standing at the entrance. She notices something odd on her mother's expression. She gets out of the car and walks to where Miriam is standing.

ALEJANDRA	ALEJANDRA
¿Qué pasó mamá?	Mom, what happened?

Miriam holds her tight, Alejandra freezes.

26 INT. GARAGE - DAY 26

Miriam and Alejandra stare at Luis's body. Alejandra closer to him than Miriam.

ALEJANDRA
¿Hace cuánto lo encontraste mamá?

MIRIAM
Nomás te fuiste.

ALEJANDRA
Todavía está caliente, ¿le checaste el pulso?

MIRIAM
No.

Miriam approaches Luis's body and leans down to touch him.

ALEJANDRA

No mamá, tranquila, ven. Yo ya lo toqué.

Alejandra helps her get up.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)

Hay que llamar a la ambulancia para que lo recojan.

Miriam shakes her head.

MIRIAM

¿Cuál ambulancia? Tu tío César me dijo claro que no le habláramos a nadie.

ALEJANDRA

Ah ¿Y qué? ¿Lo dejamos aquí?

MIRIAM

Mientras.

ALEJANDRA

¿Cómo crees mamá? Esto hay que reportarlo...

MIRIAM

¿Reportarlo? ¿En qué mundo vives tú? ¿Tú crees que no van a traer a la policía?

ALEJANDRA

Pero, ¿por qué? Si no hicimos nada nosotras.

Miriam le habla fuerte.

MIRIAM

¿No lo estás viendo ahí tirado con un clavo metido en la panza?!

ALEJANDRA

Mamá, no seas desconfiada.

MIRIAM

¿Desconfiada? Hija, no, no soy desconfiada. Soy realista. Aquí se mete la policía y nos avientan a las dos. Directito a México.

Alejandra is speechless.

27 INT. KITCHEN / HOUSE - LATER

27

Alejandra, lost in thought and with her eyes swollen, sits with her mom at the kitchen table.

A long moment of silence.

Alejandra cleans her face.

ALEJANDRA
¿Te dijo a qué hora te iba a volver a hablar?

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
Did he tell you at what time he'd call back?

MIRIAM

No.

ALEJANDRA
¿Y si no habla? ¿O si habla mañana? ¿Qué tal que hable mañana?

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
What if he doesn't call? What if he calls tomorrow? What will we do if he calls tomorrow?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
No sé, hija.....

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
I don't know.....

A beat.

Miriam leans her head and chest over the table and says

MIRIAM
Él solo hizo esta mesa... Cortó la madera, la talló, la armó y luego le echó barniz...

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
He built this table himself... Chopped the wood, carved it, put the pieces together and varnished it...

She caresses it.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Quince años comimos juntos aquí.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
We ate together here for fifteen years.

Alejandra stares at her.

A beat.

Miriam leans back up.

MIRIAM
(Looking at Alejandra)
¿Qué vamos a hacer, hija?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
What are we going to do, baby?

ALEJANDRA
No sé, pero no podemos seguir esperando.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
I don't know but we can't wait any longer.

Miriam thinks for a second.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Hay que enterrarlo nosotras,
entonces.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Let's bury him ourselves,
then.

ALEJANDRA
Nombre mamá, eso casi es peor
que cualquier otra cosa.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
No way mom, that's almost
worse than doing anything
else.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
¿Pues entonces qué?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Ok, then what?

Alejandra doesn't answer.

CUT TO:

28 INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

28

A small bathroom with a tub. The door opens. Alejandra crosses the threshold, she walks backwards dragging LUIS's (50) body, by the armpits, inside the bathroom.

Miriam helps on the other end (the legs). Luis's skin is pale, his shirt is filled with blood.

MIRIAM
Préndele a la llave primero.

MIRIAM
Turn on the faucet.

They put him down, Miriam rests and Alejandra goes to turn on the faucet. Water runs.

ALEJANDRA
Hay que quitarle los
pantalones.

ALEJANDRA
Wait. Take off his pants
first.

Miriam unbuckles his belt, unbuttons and unzips his pants, and pulls them off. Places everything aside.

MIRIAM
¿Lista?

Alejandra nods.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Un, dos, tres!

They lift the body, Miriam pushes, Alejandra pulls. They get him in and the water turns red.

Miriam looks at Alejandra, they lock eyes. Miriam then turns to see Luis's body already submerged in the water.

Alejandra sits on the toilet. Miriam takes off Luis's shirt and begins washing his stomach, rubbing it with a sponge to clean off the blood stains.

Alejandra looks at her mom: she sees her sitting on the floor, cleaning her dead father's body. She gets fixed on that image for a moment.

29 INT. BATHROOM - AFTER MIRIAM HAS CLEANED LUIS'S BODY 29

Luis's body is already out of the bathtub. Miriam and Alejandra lay him on the floor and dry him with a towel.

CUT TO:

30 INT. MAIN BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 30

Alejandra closes the curtains of the room.

[Alejandra] walks back to the bathroom.

31 INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS 31

Miriam and Alejandra begin dragging Luis's body to the bedroom.

CUT TO:

32 INT. MAIN BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER (LATE AFTERNOON) 32

Luis's body lays on the bed, Alejandra and Miriam put a sheet over him. They leave his face uncovered.

ALEJANDRA

Yo me voy a mi cuarto mamá.

Alejandra leaves the room.

33 INT. KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON 33

Miriam dials César's number. Rings once, twice, three times. A BEEP. Voice mail answers.

VOICE MAIL

Hello, Cesar Valdez speaking, leave a number and I'll call you back.

34 INT. LIVING ROOM 34

Miriam stands in front of the house's ALTAR set on an ornamental table. She tries to move the table but everything on it shakes, nearly falling. Miriam stops.

She starts taking it apart piece by piece.

35 INT. ALEJANDRA'S BEDROOM - PARALLEL 35
Alejandra sits on her bed looking out the window.

36 INT. MIRIAM'S ROOM - AFTERNOON 36

25 Miriam prays in front of Luis's body. She has turned the 25
night tables into altars.

MIRIAM
(We hear her voice
singing through all of
this scene)
Dicen que nacemos para morir,
pero en ti creemos Señor y
sabemos que morimos para
vivir, para vivir. Yo no
quiero que mi muerte sea un
nafragio, quiero Padre
llegar al huerto de tus
brazos. Dicen que nacemos
para morir, pero en ti
creemos señor y sabemos que
morimos para vivir, para
vivir.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
(We hear her voice
singing through all of
this scene)
People say we are born to
die, but we believe in you
Lord and we know that we die
to live. I don't want that my
death be a shipwrecking, I
want Father to arrive to the
orchard of your arms. People
say we are born to die, but
we believe in you Lord and we
know that we die to live.

CUT TO:

37 INT. ALEJANDRA'S ROOM - DUSK 37
Alejandra watches the night fall. Suddenly her PHONE
vibrates. She looks at it. It's a message from a friend. She
reads it: 'I hope you're having an awfully boring time with
your papás. See you soon, mensa.'

38 EXT. OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE - DUSK 38
Night is falling. Street lights are beginning to shine. The
colors in the sky are becoming paler.

39 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 39
Miriam keeps praying.

MIRIAM
 ¡Oh Jesús, único consuelo en
 las horas eternas del dolor,
 compadécete de nuestras
 lágrimas. Míralas, Señor,
 como tributo sentido que te
 ofrecemos por su alma, para
 que la purifiques y la lleves
 cuanto antes al cielo,
 Amén...Ave maría llena eres
 de gracia, el señor es
 contigo...

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
 Oh Jesus Christ, only comfort
 in times of endless pain,
 feel sorrow for our tears.
 Look at them, oh Lord, as a
 felt tribute that we offer
 for his soul so that you
 purify it and promptly take
 it into Heaven. Amen...Hail
 Mary full of grace, the Lord
 is with you...

Alejandra comes in the room.

ALEJANDRA
 Mamá.

Miriam keeps praying.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 Mamá.

Miriam stops and looks at her.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 Ya sé qué vamos a hacer.

They lock eyes for a brief moment.

CUT TO:

40 EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

40

The car is parked and running outside the house. Alejandra is holding Luis by the armpits, Miriam walks to open the back door.

ALEJANDRA
 No, mamá, la cajuela.

Miriam hesitates.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 Ándale, está pesado.

Miriam walks to the trunk, opens it and hurries to help Alejandra put the body in the trunk.

41 EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

41

Alejandra drives and Miriam rides on the passenger's seat.

MIRIAM
 ¿Tú crees que dios nos vaya
 perdonar por esto, hija?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
 Do you think God will forgive
 us for this?

ALEJANDRA
Se supone que dios perdona
todo, ¿no?

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
Isn't He supposed to forgive
everything?

MIRIAM
No seas payasa, estoy
hablando en serio.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Don't be a wise ass, I'm
serious.

ALEJANDRA
Yo también.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
Me too.

MIRIAM
Bueno pues.

MIRIAM
Alright, then.

A beat.

DRIVING SEQUENCE:

- They drive by a gas station.
- They leave the city.
- They drive on the highway.
- They turn into a lonely road.

42 I/E. ROAD - NIGHT

42

Alejandra stops the car.

ALEJANDRA
¿Lista?

Miriam looks at her fixedly.

CUT TO:

Miriam and Alejandra get Luis out of the trunk and drag him
away from the car.

We follow them on close ups all of this time.

The more they walk the more we hear WATER.

They finally stop. Miriam leans down and kisses Luis.

MIRIAM
Te amo viejo, perdóname.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
I love Luis, please forgive
me.

Alejandra touches his face tenderly.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
Adiós, papá.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
Goodbye, dad.

The camera begins to TRAVEL OUT and allow us to see what's
around them: A RIVER.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 (We can't hear her
 clearly)
 ¿Qué tal que lo hubieran
 salvado?

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 What if they had save him?

MIRIAM
 ¿Qué?

She lifts her head from under her knees.

ALEJANDRA
 ¿Qué tal que la ambulancia lo
 hubiera salvado?

ALEJANDRA
 What if the ambulance had
 saved him?

Open-mouthed, Miriam looks at Alejandra who lowers her head.

ALEJANDRA
 Perdón...

A beat.

MIRIAM
 (Turning her head to
 signal at Luis)
 Ayer en el desayuno estábamos
 platicando de Hidalgo. De
 cuando fuimos a las aguas
 termales, ¿te acuerdas?

MIRIAM
 Yesterday, at breakfast, we
 were talking about Hidalgo.
 About the time we went to the
 hot springs, remember?

Alejandra shakes her head. Miriam seems absorbed in thought.

MIRIAM
 Que tu tía Celia se rompió la
 pierna por andar espiando a
 César, ¿no te acuerdas?

MIRIAM
 Your aunt Celia broke her leg
 for spying on César, you
 really don't remember?

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 No.

MIRIAM
 A lo mejor estabas muy chica.

MIRIAM
 Perhaps you were too little.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 A lo mejor.

ALEJANDRA
 Perhaps.

A long silence.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 ¿Mamá, por qué no hablamos
 con un doctor? A la mejor nos
 puede conseguir un
 certificado de defunción y
 ya, así está más fácil.

MIRIAM
 Que no, hija. Tu tío César ya
 me dijo que no le habláramos
 a nadie.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 Lo velamos con la gente de
 Manos de Cristo.

MIRIAM
 No, no.

A beat.

ALEJANDRA
 ¿Por qué tienes tanto miedo
 mamá?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
 ¿Y por qué tú tienes tantas
 ganas de que la gente se
 entere? Que no lees las
 noticias hija o qué... Tu
 papá nos abandonó y ahí
 estuvo. Decimos que se fue a
 Minesota o Nueva York, a
 Canadá si es necesario. Nomás
 se fue y ya no supimos nada.
 Nada de nada.

ALEJANDRA
 ¿Y el carro?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
 ¿El carro qué?

ALEJANDRA
 ¿Por qué no se lo llevó?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
 Porque no es tan hijo de la
 chingada como para
 abandonarme y dejarme sin
 nada.

A beat.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
 (As if this were a fact)
 Por eso me dejó el carro.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 Mom, why don't we talk to a
 doctor? Maybe she can give us
 a Death Certificate and that
 would make everything so much
 easier.

MIRIAM
 No, Alejandra. Your uncle
 Cesar already said to me:
 Don't call anyone.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 We can do the funeral at
 Manos de Cristo.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 What are you so afraid of
 mama?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
 And why do you want so many
 people to find out? Don't you
 read the news? Let's say that
 he abandoned us and that's
 it. We say that he went up to
 Minnesota, New York or even
 Canada if necessary. He just
 left and that was it. We
 didn't know anything from
 then on. Nothing.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 What about the car?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
 The car what?

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
 Why didn't he take it with
 him?

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
 Because he is not such a
 lousy husband. He wouldn't
 just go and leave me nothing.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
 That's why he left me the
 car.

ALEJANDRA	ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
También te dejó la casa.	He left you the house too.
MIRIAM (CONT'D)	MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Sí, la casa también.	Yes, the house too.

47	INT. RESTAURANT - DAY	47
	A Mexican restaurant.	
	Miriam, dressed with a white shirt and black pants (as all of the waitress in the restaurant) stands behind the counter. A costumer calls her, she reacts.	
	Miriam waits a table.	
48	INT. STREET - NIGHT	48
	Miriam walks through streets. She seems lost. (Hand held).	
49	EXT. RIVER - NIGHT	49
	Miriam and Alejandra walk through the bushes. (Hand held).	
50	EXT. STREET - DAWN	50
	(Miriam driving). They now drive through East Austin: some empty lots, and some run down apartment buildings. Everything else looks pretty much the same as the other neighborhood.	
	It's very early in the morning so most of the streets are still lit by night lights.	
	MIRIAM	MIRIAM (CONT'D)
	¿Tú crees que dios nos vaya perdonar por esto, hija?	Do you think God will forgive us for this?
	ALEJANDRA	ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
	Se supone que dios perdona todo, ¿no?	Isn't He supposed to forgive everything?
	MIRIAM	MIRIAM (CONT'D)
	No seas payasa, estoy hablando en serio.	Don't be a wise ass, I'm serious.
	ALEJANDRA	ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
	Yo también.	Me too.
	MIRIAM	MIRIAM
	Bueno pues.	Alright, then.
	A beat.	
	MIRIAM	MIRIAM
	Ya va a ser por aquí.	I'm sure it's close by.

Alejandra helps Miriam stand up and they rush back to the car. They jump inside and close their doors.

Miriam freezes.

ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)	ALEJANDRA (CONT'D)
Mamá, ya vámonos, nos van a ver.	Mom, let's go, someone might see us.

Miriam doesn't move. She starts crying and looks at Alejandra. In a synchronized impulse they hug each other really tight.

They both cry.....

They let go off each other, Miriam wipes the tears from her face, Alejandra imitates her.

MIRIAM	MIRIAM
Vámonos, pues.	Ok, let's go.

Miriam steps on the gas pedal. They leave but the camera stays still showing Luis's body laying on top of a set of concrete stairs.

The camera starts pulling back and we begin to see more of the place. Finally it is revealed where they've left him: the entrance of a CHURCH.

The sun keeps rising.....

51 INT. HOUSE / DINING ROOM - DUSK 51

The house is in absolute silence.

We see a man approaching the backyard door. He holds a toolbox on one of his hands.

The man KNOCKS door. He waits.

A beat.

Miriam comes in the living room. She can't see the man's face because it is already getting too dark. He waves.

Miriam approaches the door and opens it.

MIRIAM
Hola, José ¿Cómo estás?

JOSÉ
Hola Mi...

MIRIAM
Luis no está, eh. Salió.

JOSÉ
Ah, ¿y le falta mucho para regresar?

MIRIAM
Ah sí, mucho... Salió de la ciudad.

JOSÉ
¿En serio?

MIRIAM
Sí, salió de emergencia... para un trabajo.

JOSÉ
Bueno, nada más lo quería saludar y regresarle esto.

He hands her the toolbox.

JOSÉ (CONT'D)
(While Miriam takes the toolbox from him)
Me la prestó hace como una semana y nomás la usé un día pero hasta hoy alcancé a venir a traérsela. Ya ves que estamos medio lejos.

MIRIAM
Ah, está bueno, gracias... Yo le digo que veniste y se la dejaste.

A beat.

An uncomfortable silence. Miriam doesn't open the door much more and José just stands there as if he was waiting to be invited in.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Bueno, buenas noches JOSÉ.

A beat.

JOSÉ
Buenas noches.

Miriam smiles and closes the door awkwardly. José takes a second to leave.

Note 1: Steadycam shots: SCENE 18, 20 and 43.

Note 2: At some point in the script, maybe in the car, Miriam tells Alejandra that her father was making a desk for her.

Note 3: Print alternative dialogue of previous version (Drat_05_02) for the car scene when Miriam has just picked Alejandra up from the airport.

References

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