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From Gardener to Greenblood

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Report

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Abstract

From Gardener to Greenblood

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Abstract: This master's report will explore the process of writing my thesis script *Greenblood*, from the initial conception as a feature length screenplay to an hour long television pilot. I will layout my background and personal experience with the marijuana industry that allowed me to even conceive the idea and world behind *Greenblood*, as well as the development process from first pitch to original conception to where it lives at the time of this writing.

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The Grow

Adventure seeking has always pumped through my veins with vigor. Not so much jumping out of planes or off the side of cliffs with giant rubber bands strapped to my ankles, more psychological and personal risk taking-- Things society tells us are taboo or possibly illegal. I've instinctively procured it for myself, my therapist has many opinions on why I do this and what it stems from but either way it's led to me leading a somewhat colorful life to this point.

In late 2012 I moved back to the United States from the Philippines where I had been living for nearly five years, primarily working in film and television. The story of my time there would take up an entire thesis report on its own. But I was back in the US and onto my next adventure. In April of 2013 I moved to Ukiah, California, the small pot farming, wine growing town in Mendocino County where *Greenblood*, my thesis script is set. I had

friends in Northern California since my undergrad days at St. Mary's College in the East Bay, long before my tenure in the Philippines. Like many others residing in that region of the US, several of these friends had grown up in the family business of marijuana cultivation. Saint Mary's was an expensive liberal arts school twenty minutes from San Francisco. Fifty percent of its students smoked weed on a fairly regular basis, including myself. I never liked the idea of paying for marijuana and I had started several small businesses since I was eleven years old-- My first foray as an entrepreneur was knocking on every door in my neighborhood and asking if I could mow my neighbor's lawns for five dollars. I quickly gained eight clients and was making forty dollars a week. At St. Mary's I saw an opportunity and seized it. Within three months I became the most popular marijuana distributor on campus. I was getting premium quality product straight from the growers in Mendocino. I was personable, social, and not a complete

stoner. I offered Wednesday specials to help my fellow students float through the trudge of mid week.

I had brought up the idea of growing my own weed with a few my grower friends back in the mid 2000's. Trying my hand at their family craft, seeing how green my thumbs might be but the timing wasn't right and I wasn't taken very seriously. I had always wanted to grow, it was something on my bucket list but also something I was passionate about not to mention the profit margin of selling my own medicine.

I had loved working in my dad's vegetable garden where we grew everything from eggplant to sugar snap peas to corn to squash. Preparing the soil, planting the seeds, watching the plants grow bigger and bigger, tending to them with love and care for several months as flowers start to form, then fruit and finally enjoying your labor of love throughout the entire summer. Growing pot would prove to be a very similar process and I thought back to my childhood

several times throughout my experience when I was finally given my chance to grow.

Within a couple months of returning to the States, I got in touch with my friend Bobby. We'd stayed in contact while I'd been in the South Pacific as I would call him once a year to say hello, ask about his young kids, and what new strains of weed he was growing-- how many pounds he was getting per plant, what their THC content was looking like, and what people were paying for it. Bobby's passion and love for marijuana was mostly fueled by the stacks of cash the ripened, trimmed and cured buds would bring in. But as I learned over the years, Bobby took a lot of pride in his work and enjoyed sharing his knowledge about the science behind marijuana botany. This science was a mix of trial and error as well as a collection of advice gathered from other growers and mentors Bobby had known throughout his life.

Bobby was excited to hear from me. My return to the States and to California was music to his ears-- Bobby could smell the old, dirty twenty dollar bills stacked in piles fifty thick and held tight with rubber bands. I had made Bobby hundreds of thousands of dollars before I left for the Philippines, helping to get his green medicine to the patients who needed it most. Of course, Bobby had several "friends" like me who had made him a fair amount of money but our relationship always felt like it went further than business. After a brief catch up, I asked Bobby if now was a better time for me to grow-- More specifically if he had an open garden I could man or a parcel of land where I could put in a garden of my own. His son and daughter were running his three spots and his mother was running another but he would ask around. It sounded like he was genuine but not very promising.

A few weeks later, Bobby called back, "Your dream is coming true. An old friend of mine, Juan has a spot outside

of Ukiah up in the hills, overlooking Lake Mendocino". My heart literally skipped a beat, I stopped breathing. Something I had wanted to do for nearly ten years was coming to fruition. "There's no house. You'll have to live in a camper trailer or maybe we can convert a shipping container. There's no electricity or running water". I didn't even hesitate. I told him I'd camp in a tent and eat canned chicken for the rest of the year. I wanted that grow spot. Sign me up. When could I meet Juan?

I moved to the grow site in late April to break in the ground. No one had lived on this land, let alone grown anything on it. Twenty five holes, six foot wide and three foot deep needed to be dug in order to plant the legal medical marijuana garden. The solar powered water pump needed to be assembled and installed fifty yards down from the property where a small stream ran. A six inch deep ditch to bury the water line in hard as clay earth needed to be dug with a pickaxe, the entire length of the eleven

acre property, over six hundred feet. After the ten cubic yards of soil and the three cubic yards of raw chicken manure were dropped off by their respective dumptrucks, I had to thoroughly mix them together at the top of the property. Then load as much as I could into the back of an old pick-up truck Bobby loaned me for the grow and drive it down the steep hill, load after load, to the twenty five freshly dug holes where I would eventually plant the baby XJ-13 marijuana plants.

Bobby set me up with a good amount of general knowledge and was available by phone to answer my myriad of questions but for the most part I was on my own. Bobby only visited twice during that grow season. He offered some tips and advice when seeing the plants in person but he certainly didn't hold my hand throughout the process. Like a great mentor, he expected me to make the majority of the decisions that needed to be made on a daily basis. He encouraged me to trust my gut. He knew I would make some

mistakes and he let me make them. You're not going to get good at anything in life, whether it be screenwriting or growing pot, without experimenting, testing ideas, see what works and what doesn't.

I had always wanted to grow marijuana-- Not a few plants under a high pressure sodium bulb in your closet, which I attempted to do at friend's apartment the year I graduated high school until his mother discovered our secret hydroponic garden and immediately shut down the operation. I wanted to grow a real deal, outdoor garden. Eight foot tall plants that produce four to six pounds of weed a piece. Without this dream and ambition to grow my own weed there would be no *Greenblood* to speak of.

This pilot script, which became my thesis project is not just inspired by real life experience and characters, it's more a fictionalized autobiography of an experience. It's the most personal story I've ever written, so much of who I am is invested in its pages. Not so much that

Greenblood is about me or Bobby or someone else specifically but it's definitely a fusion of my personal experience, the hundreds of stories I was told by others while living in Ukiah, the degree in growing both literally and figuratively. Every character contains elements of real people I was fortunate to spend time around. Whether or not I grow marijuana on that scale again is unknown. But the time I spent in Ukiah, the time I spent with Bobby, and the time I spent alone on that mountainside surrounded by twenty five of nature's greatest plants will have a lasting effect on me as a human being and as a writer.

The Story That Stuck

When I was living on the hillside tending to my garden for better part of year with no electricity I did a lot of reading and writing. One day while in town gathering supplies for myself and the grow, I visited the local book shop I liked to patron. Sitting on a table in front was a new book published by a local journalist, Bruce Anderson and titled, *Behind The Green Curtain: True Crime Stories from Mendocino County*. The book is a collection of newspaper articles he'd written over the last decade, all with a common theme-- crimes pertaining to marijuana and those that grow, cultivate, and distribute it.

The anthology is full of compelling articles but one in particular jumped out, grabbed me by the throat, and punched me in the gut. It's about a young undocumented Mexican kid in his early twenties, who had immigrated to the US without papers, in order to reunite with family who

was making their living growing weed deep in a federal forest of Mendocino.

At some point during the grow season, the kid was experiencing some genitourineral discomfort and decided it was best to visit the local STD testing clinic. A few days after, he received a call from the clinic asking him to come back in for the results where he was told that he was HIV positive and was asked to inform anyone with which he had had sexual intercourse. He immediately found the young woman he was romantically involved with at the time and told her the terrible news. She was angry, disgusted and told him to never contact her again. Feeling horrible about himself and the situation, he went back to his family's grow camp in the woods. He got drunk, crawled inside his sleeping bag, tucked his uncle's shotgun up underneath his chin and pulled the trigger, instantly making it all go away.

His family, not sure what to do, afraid they'd be arrested and deported, drug his body, still in the sleeping bag, down to a hiking trail and left it, where he was found by hikers the next day. The police investigated, found the girlfriend and went to the clinic only to discover a mistake had been made-- The young man wasn't HIV positive. It was a mistake. A mix-up. Something lost in translation. This young man, tormented with shame and grief, took his own life.

Of all the stories in the collection, it's the only one I've returned to and read a handful of times over the years. So many things about it touched me on a deep emotional level. I could only begin to imagine how isolated and alone he must have felt. How he probably blamed himself, hated the person who he thought infected him. The massive tsunami of emotions he must have experienced in the aftermath of being told the results of his HIV test drove him out of his mind. This young man's story burrowed deep

into my gut and lived there for the next four years. I couldn't shake it. I knew I would write something about this undocumented kid trying to forge a new life for himself in the states through the marijuana business. I wasn't quite sure what shape the story would take or the entrance point or the angle at which to approach it but I knew one day I would write about the essence of this kid.

Four years later *Greenblood* is born and the young undocumented man's story manifests in the form of Aguilar, the undocumented Mexican character who has a seemingly small role in the beginning of the story but grows into a major character by the end. Aguilar represents this idea of a person willing to take great risks for an opportunity to improve their life. He leaves home, travels across the border illegally, risks being arrested or even killed. He takes a job working for Tadpole, someone he doesn't know very well. A job that he knows can get him arrested and deported, growing hundreds of marijuana plants deep in the

hills on federal land. But Aguilar knows it's his only hope for a better future not only for he and his brother but for his family now and future generations.

The stakes are high for everyone in *Greenblood* but they're especially high for Aguilar. He's living up in the hills, working with someone who doesn't value he or his brother's lives. No one but the boss knows where they are. If something happens to either of them, there won't be a police investigation, no one will be looking for them, no one will care.

The Ramirez-Berg Pitch

In the Fall of 2016 I took Professor Berg's Alternative Poetics. For the final we had the option of writing a thirty page paper or writing the first act of a feature film. I obviously chose the latter as I far prefer to write a story than an academic paper. I looked through a list of already existing story ideas I had compiled. Immediately, I gravitated to the story of the undocumented kid who committed suicide in his sleeping bag thinking he had contracted a fatal disease. This kid would eventually become a major character in my *Greenblood* pilot-- Aguilar. The first step of writing the first act of a feature script was pitching your idea to the class for feedback. *Greenblood* originally titled *The Gardener* was first conceived as a feature film. Mostly because, before I had come to The University of Texas at Austin my brain was programmed to automatically start formulating a story as a

feature film in three acts. I had never written a pilot for a television series so I didn't really know where to begin.

The original feature concept was centered around Aguilar as the main character and would have been a thriller with elements of horror. In that version of the story, Aguilar was employed by Frank, a local white guy who owned and operated a winery, to man a secret marijuana garden deep in the woods. Frank instructs Aguilar to not leave the garden but of course Aguilar does, ventures into town, meets a local girl, and falls in love with her. Two weeks before harvest and the day after a heavy rain, Aguilar discovers a dead body in the garden. When he digs it up, he realizes the body is a Mexican kid much like himself.

I even played with the idea of the dead body being Aguilar's brother who had manned the garden the year before but then disappeared-- Aguilar went looking for his brother and ended up working for Frank. Either way, Aguilar

discovers a body, realizes this was the previous gardener and Aguilar would probably meet this same fate if he didn't leave immediately. Aguilar's dilemma is that he needs the money to send back to family in Mexico (his mother will die unless she has a major operation soon) but if he's not clever, he'll end up in a hole of his own in the garden.

When I pitched the idea to the class and to Professor Berg, it was well received, feedback was constructive and for the most part the overall concept was seen as having much potential. Professor Berg's big notes were to decide on tone and what exactly Aguilar's story would be because he wasn't sure the dead body in the garden with a ticking clock for Aguilar and the love story with the girl from town would work as well in the same story. The two plot lines didn't necessarily compliment one another all that well in Berg's opinion.

I took this advice seriously and considered what direction to go-- Ultimately, I decided the darker,

thriller tone was more the direction I wanted and would make the love interest a much smaller part of the story or cut it all together. This meant the bulk of the drama and story would be between Aguilar and Frank. This would put a lot of pressure on these two characters to carry the film, but I had plenty of time to figure that out is what I told myself.

So much of my own personal writing process I've learned, is diving into the characters and seeing what story they want to tell. Often times I discover story avenues through dialogue and character interactions. I'm getting better about constructing plot and story before getting deep into the script but even with the final rewrites of what is now *Greenblood* I found myself discovering story beats through conversations I was writing between characters. The balance of craft and instinct is a constant battle for me but I like to think I am gaining a better understanding of what works and what doesn't before

I've spent too much time going down a rabbit hole of character defining scenes that don't necessarily further the story.

Out of the Woods

As the fall semester came to an end and winter break started, I began thinking a lot about what I would write for Professor Stuart Kelban's advanced screenwriting class. We would be given the choice between writing a feature film or a television pilot, either half hour or hour length. I couldn't stop thinking about *The Gardener* story I had pitched for Berg's class but as I thought more about the format I wanted to work with, I realized how badly I wanted to develop a television pilot. I had absolutely no idea where to begin but I had faith Stuart would point me in the right direction.

In the Spring of 2016 I wrote a spec script titled, *Silent P* for the Amazon series, *Transparent*. With Stuart's guidance on that project I wrote something I was really proud of and ended up receiving a Humanitas Awards nomination. Given our past success with that script I felt that working with Stuart on my first television pilot was a great choice and at the very least I might be able to write something I could again feel good about showing people.

When the Spring semester commenced, I pitched the concept of *The Gardener*, basically the same pitch I had given for Berg's class but with the preface that I wanted to write it as a television pilot. Stuart's major notes were that in order for this to become a pilot that sets up a series, there would need to be more storylines, subplots, and we would have to get out of the woods-- meaning so much of the story couldn't be focused on Aguilar manning this garden deep in the forest. He's too isolated, he won't be able to interact with other characters-- because you need more than one person to create sixty pages worth of compelling scenes and story-- what a concept!

Often throughout my grad school experience at UT, as soon as a professor says something like this to me, I immediately think how insane it was that I didn't just instinctively know it already and how simple certain concepts are. When you're at home away from the world, writing for days on end, these concepts have a way of not being so simple.

I went to work creating and building more of a world outside of the hidden marijuana garden in the woods. I

decided the love interest was a good idea, especially since there would be an entire series worth of episodes to develop that relationship and they didn't have to fall madly in love in the pilot. Her name would be Maria Jose. She's strong and independent, speaks her mind, knows what she likes and pursues it. She's someone who will challenge Aguilar and anyone who comes into her orbit.

I decided that it would be really interesting and add a lot of conflict to the story and character relationships if Frank were gay. You don't see a lot of gay main characters in crime series. *The Wire* did it very well with the character of Omar but there aren't a ton of examples like this. So I created Moises, a Mexican man in his 40's and Frank's partner for the last decade. Moises would mediate between Frank and Aguilar and would be this really interesting connector of two very different worlds-- Frank, a gay white man in the winery business with a secret side business of growing marijuana-- Aguilar, a young Mexican garden hand who knows virtually no English and has very little agency in the beginning of the story.

I then created several side characters that would aid in subplots and even more world building like Ivan, Maria Jose's older brother who is just getting out of prison. Ivan has cartel connections and once he learns of Aguilar and the secret garden, he plans to rob it. Another strong character who would end up making it to the final draft of the pilot script is The Elf-- A notorious member of the Sinaloa cartel who comes looking for the missing Mexican-- The guy Aguilar found buried in the garden. The Elf is a dangerous individual and serves as a powerful antagonist force, knowing he's lurking in the shadows should put the audience on edge.

At this point in the rewriting and polishing process, it seems crazy to me that I thought some of those storylines and character relationships would play. The holes are so glaringly obvious now. This first imagining of *The Gardener* as a television series would undergo many rewrites both during the spring semester and over this past summer 2017 as it transformed into *Greenblood*. But that first step had to be taken. It was a major stab in the dark and from it much stronger ideas would evolve as both Stuart

and the class became more invested in the story over the course of the class. Characters would be reshaped, combined, and completely forgotten. Relationships would be tightened, reimagined, and stakes for every character would be raised. The plot of the pilot, which I never really had a good handle on would take a very poignant shape, giving the episode, the characters, and the series as a whole much needed focus.

Pink Gold, The Future

As the weeks went on and I turned in various drafts of outlines, I was able to get deeper and deeper into the heart of the story. The classes feedback as well as Stuart's, pointed out several major flaws in the story, character, and overall arc of the pilot that would be setting up a series.

Rather than break down every change that happened along the way, I'll mostly describe where the pilot went from that first outline and story bible to where it lives as of now, which in my opinion is a pretty good place. The first big story element I changed was cutting Frank's secret garden in the woods where he employed Aguilar as well as Frank owning a winery. Instead, Aguilar is manning a garden for the cartel deep in the hills above Ukiah with his brother, Damian. I liked the idea of Aguilar having a brother and decided to bring him right into the front end of the story and open with Aguilar and Damian working in this garden of pink marijuana-- An addition that came nearly two months into the summer rewrite, and really raised the stakes, making this garden Aguilar was working

in very special and valuable as the strain known as Pink Gold is an heirloom strain from the days of the Mayan Empire.

I always loved this idea of Maria Jose, who I ended up naming MJ for short, being a major part of the story and being more than just a love interest to Aguilar. I wanted her to have her own arc and subplots throughout the pilot and series. I decided to make MJ Frank's daughter that he had with a Mexican woman twenty five years ago (we had to lose Frank being gay to do this, which I really liked but in the end this decision felt right). The mother died when MJ was a child and Frank raised her on his own. We also lost the older brother, Ivan with this new family set up. Aguilar does fall for MJ during the pilot but the idea of it really isn't introduced until the very end. Plus MJ has a boyfriend whose family has been in the winery business for over a hundred years and is trying to get MJ to leave marijuana and convert to wine. I tightened relationships, built in stronger conflict, and raised stakes with a few solid changes that really improved the narrative in the process.

The Elf's introduction into the story and how much we see of him throughout went through many variations. At one point he had four scenes before a climactic moment where we realize the pink marijuana is his and he'll be looking for Frank and Aguilar since they are the ones who stole it. Stuart and I finally decided this summer that The Elf should just show up at the very end of the pilot with none other than Aguilar's brother Damian whom we hadn't seen since the opening. This also sets up a cool story element where Aguilar and his brother will be on opposing sides of this war that's about to be set in motion.

Three completely new characters ended up in the final version of the pilot. I decided to give Frank a garden shop where he sells supplies for growing weed. But Frank's interests lie beyond selling quality fertilizers and crystal boosters. Frank uses the store to gain access to other growers, he uses how much of something they buy to figure out what strain and how many plants they're growing. Then with the help of his partner, Officer Curtis, a local Ukiah cop, they rip off the gardens. In the pilot they rob a couple, Scratch and Zina, who end up kidnapping MJ and

making her take them to the garden of Pink Gold in the hills. This builds to our climactic showdown where they attempt to take the score from Frank, Curtis, and Aguilar as payback for being robbed in the beginning.

The class was a major help but without Stuart continually pushing me to go deeper, create more conflict, create better story, use my knowledge and experiences of the weed growing world to really make this story authentic and specific, this pilot just wouldn't be what it is. Sure, I would have written some compelling characters, entertaining scenes, maybe even some solid sequences but *Greenblood* would be a much different script and not nearly as good. It was a difficult journey that saw seven different drafts but in the end, I can say with certain it's a story I'm happy with it.

Appendix A: The Original Bible

The Gardener A One Hour Drama

A local pot grower in Northern California struggling with the changing economic climate of the marijuana industry since legalization, teams up with an undocumented Mexican to rip off a cartel garden deep in the hills of Mendocino.

BREAKING BAD meets NARCOS

Over the course of the first season Aguilar goes from being a peaceful farmer to being imbedded in a drug war he wants no part of. Unlike Walter White (Breaking Bad) Aguilar doesn't choose to sell drugs as a way to support his family. And unlike Pablo Escobar (Narcos) he doesn't have aspirations of being rich or powerful or feared by everyone in the world. As soon as Aguilar can put an end to or escape the violent world he's found himself in, he'll gladly go back to farming. Aguilar would love nothing more than a simple life, a woman to love and have children with. To take care of his mother and siblings. Those are

Aguilar's dreams. He wants peace. But he'll have to fight to get back to it. By the end of the first season, Aguilar has become The Gardener, a name synonymous with fighting back against the cartel and exploitation-- *A man you cross only if you want to become fertilizer for next year's crop.*

SETTINGS

The majority of the first season takes place in the small, Northern California town of Ukiah. Some have grown up and never left and some have just arrived to try their hand at farming the green gold. Ukiah is the type of Northern California town divided by race and economics like most American towns but also by who grows marijuana and who doesn't. Many people in these towns want nothing to do with the marijuana business, legal (medical) or not they believe weed is the gateway drug Reagan said it was. The trillion dollars spent on the drug war has been worth every penny and anyone involved with pot or any other drug should be locked up. The growers believe they aren't hurting anyone and you'd have to be crazy to not put some plants in the ground (twenty-five legally) and make yourself upwards of

four hundred grand cash every year-- Until before legalization at least. Now you're lucky to clear two hundred a year and that's if you're a professional, seasoned grower with decades of experience.

The story begins in the Pink Gold Garden operated by the Sinaloa Cartel. The trees break just enough to allow enough light for the plants to thrive during the grow season. Five hundred pink marijuana plants.

CHARACTERS

AGUILAR -- Mexican immigrant. Early 20's. Born and raised in a rural farming community in Sinaloa. Aguilar is a hard worker. Very loyal. The cartel diverted the water from his family's land to the farm next door they've recently acquired to grow weed.

XIMENA-- Aguilar's garden dog. 3 - 5 years old. Some sort of heeler, shepherd mix. A very smart dog but her sole purpose is to keep an eye on the garden and alert Aguilar of anything approaching, whether human or animal. Some people don't let their garden dogs roam free, they keep

them chained at the perimeter of the garden all year long. If the dog dies, they go to the pound and find another. Ximena may be killed, at least badly injured during a robbery attempt at some point in this first season.

FRANK -- White. Late 40's, early 50's. Grew up near Ukiah and now owns and operates a very small winery which is as much a passion project as a business. Think mom and pop winery not big tourist place with a tasting room. To keep his winery afloat and launder money through it to expand his business, Frank grows weed in a secret garden in the woods. He employs Aguilar to man the garden. Frank is supplying the plants and everything necessary for the operation as well as teaching Aguilar how to do everything. Frank will keep seventy percent of the harvest. Frank isn't mean but he's tough. Has a hard exterior, not overcompensating or trying to hide that he's gay but he decided a long time ago he needed to be perceived a certain way to keep people from asking too many questions or bothering him about his sexuality.

MARIA JOSE -- Yes, you have to call her by her full first name, her mother named her Maria Jose and it's a good strong name. Born in Mexico but came to the States with her mother when she was nine years old. Early 20's. Her mother died of cancer last year and it was devastating. She has a high school education and takes two classes at the community college. She works at the local Food Max as a cashier. Demands that people refer to her by her full name, Maria Jose. She doesn't smoke weed or associate with people that smoke, grow, or sell it. Her mother was very protective, left Mexico to escape cartel violence. Maria Jose sees all drugs as being the same and anyone involved with them is not someone she wants to be around. Aguilar pursues Maria Jose relentlessly but it takes some time before she will entertain the idea of something more than friends with him.

THE BUTCHER -- White dude but speaks decent spanish because he's always dated Mexican women and it's necessary to be taken seriously by them. He's in his 30's but acts younger. Smokes weed every day. He slangs meat at the same Food Max

where Maria Jose works and Aguilar shops for food and supplies. Like many people in town, he sells weed on the side. He's not trying to get rich doing it, just to smoke for free and have some extra spending money. He might even have a few plants under lights at his place just for something to do.

IVAN -- Maria Jose's older brother whom she hasn't seen in a while. He's been in and out of jail since high school and he probably didn't graduate. Ivan genuinely wants to protect his sister and be the big brother he's supposed to be but he always finds a way to fuck it up, although not his intention, it's what happens none the less.

MOISES -- Came to the US from Mexico about twenty years ago. 40's. Frank's partner for fifteen years and runs the vineyard with him. Moises helps Frank find young undocumented workers to tend the garden in the woods. Moises has his own story of how and why he came to the States (will develop and it will be important for his arc in the series). Moises takes a certain interest in Aguilar,

like a big brother watching out for him. Moises will be put in a very tough situation of being loyal to Frank or protecting Aguilar.

THE GHOST -- This mysterious person moving silently about in the forest watches Aguilar unnoticed. This person could be male or female and moves like a ghost. She might be Native American but we won't know until later in the series when she becomes an ally to Aguilar and reveals him/herself. Aguilar had felt a presence for some time but believed it was his dead grandmother who he'd been asking to watch over him since he came to the woods.

THE ELF (El Duende) is sent by the Sinaloa Cartel to find out what happened to their man who's gone missing. The Elf is known and feared throughout Mexico and the US. If the Elf is looking for you, you've really fucked up. They say he's able to communicate with the dead and that's how he always finds who and what he's looking for. Either way he's a scary dude who obsessively pursues a job until it's finished.

CHARACTER ARCS

At the heart of the series is Abelino Aguilar, a young farmer from Sinaloa, Mexico who begins the series as good natured, hard working, and leading a simple life he's perfectly content with. Aguilar kneels to pray every night before he goes to sleep. His grandmother, whom he had a special connection with, passed away earlier in the year. Aguilar is sensitive and compassionate, unable to slaughter a pig in the pilot, pleading with his father to do it for him.

Aguilar's journey throughout the first season takes him places he never thought he'd see, exposing him to things he never thought he'd have to face, both externally and internally. Aguilar overcomes some major fears and makes choices that make him question his relationship with God, why he'd be put in these situations, and who he really is as a person. Two of the things worrying him the most are, "What will my mother and what will God think of me"? Aguilar's world is completely turned upside down. He knew evil existed but he thought he could choose to avoid it.

Aguilar finds himself in a place where he has to fight for his own life as well as the lives of those he cares about, especially Maria Jose who's fallen madly in love with. Aguilar learns the true meaning of self preservation as he grows closer and closer to the very thing he despises-- A gangster, drug lord with not just a preceding reputation but but full blown folklore known on both sides of the border. By the end of the season, Aguilar has become The Gardener, a name synonymous with taking on the cartel and those who exploit undocumented workers.

Maria Jose is still grieving the loss of her mother, who died of cancer less than six months ago, when she meets Aguilar in the pilot. She took the last semester of community college off to deal with her mother's death. Maria Jose is head strong and funny, although her sense of humor is a little dark when we meet her. She likes genuine, down to earth people, that's what attracts her to Aguilar even though she has many reservations about him in the beginning. If her mother were alive, she'd tell Maria Jose to stay away from that boy, he's nothing but trouble. Her mother was wary of guys like Aguilar, especially if they

were involved in the marijuana business in any way. She pushed Maria to continue her schooling and to find a good, religious man with a career. At first Maria Jose is okay with being Aguilar's friend but really doesn't see him as anything else, even though he's clearly in love with her. But her love for Aguilar grows throughout the first season as she sees how he reacts to the unforeseen situations they find themselves in once she's mixed up in the local drug war. If it weren't for Maria Jose's involvement, Aguilar might have just run away but he risks his life to help her and she knows that. Maria Jose's estranged, older brother, Ivan shows back up several episodes into the season, complicating things for she and Aguilar.

Frank is a local business owner and Ukiah city council member. Frank has been with his partner Moises for fifteen years, hired him to work at his small vineyard and soon they became a pair. Frank doesn't necessarily hide his sexuality from his social circle but he's not loud about it either. Frank doesn't want to offend people and chooses to respect people's comfort levels, this causes a lot of tension between him and Moises who is tired of playing

butch around Frank's friends, mostly at the wine parties and fundraisers they often attend. Frank will have to take a hard look at the sort of man he wants to be and the sort of life he wants to live after he kills a member of the Sinaloa cartel. The gangster tries blackmailing Frank, threatening to expose him as a weed dealer to his city council friends who believe Frank to be anti-marijuana advocate, trying to keep legal weed out of Ukiah. The cartel comes to town, conducting an "investigation", led by The Elf, to find out what has happened to their man. It's only a matter of time until the cartel figures out Frank had something to do with it. Frank is pushed to the edge as he tries to keep it all together, doing whatever he has to do to keep his life intact. Frank sets up Aguilar as the fall guy, only to have it backfire on him.

Moises is from Sinaloa and knows Aguilar's mother from when he was a kid. Moises offers to help get Aguilar set up with work if he can make it to Ukiah. Moises begins the series more in the background of he and Frank's dealings. As someone who also immigrated to the U.S. illegally at first, he's never quite had the confidence to voice his

opinion on certain issues both socially and at the vineyard. He usually follows Frank's advice or plan of action both in business and with many issues in their relationship. Frank doesn't totally manipulate Moises but Frank is more in charge and Moises allows him to be. Throughout the series Moises begins to make more decisions, taking action without Frank's prior knowledge and comes into his own as a human being. He sees himself as a big brother to Aguilar and feels a sense of protection. Moises begins to distrust Frank's ability to handle the drug war Frank has started with the Sinaloa cartel and begins to look out for Aguilar despite Frank's instructions. Moises loves Frank, betraying him is the hardest thing he's ever done but he knows in his heart it's what he has to do even though it will destroy everything he's worked so hard to build.

Ivan is Maria Jose's brother and returns to Ukiah after being away for many years. Last Maria Jose heard, he'd been locked up. Ivan isn't affiliated with any gangs or cartels but he's no stranger to crime. Ivan is a hustler at heart, always looking for an opportunity to score and

isn't afraid to get violent if necessary. Ivan loves his sister and wants to protect her but he's also selfish and doesn't consider how his actions will affect those close to him. Ivan will go from doing anything to get ahead, not worrying about who he hurts. By the end of the season, Ivan finds himself genuinely caring about people, relearning what it means to be a part of a family, eventually making some pretty big sacrifices for Maria Jose and Aguilar.

The Elf is sent to Ukiah by the Sinaloa Cartel to find out what happened to their man who's gone missing. They call him The Elf because he's believed to deal in dark magic, possessing special powers that allow him to communicate with spirits. Whether that's true or not, he's one bad dude. The Elf is willing to do unthinkable things to human beings in order to get what he needs from them. Very creative. Aguilar will face The Elf, this encounter officially turning Aguilar into The Gardener.

THE PILOT

The story of the pilot episode follows Aguilar who helps run the family farm with his parents and younger siblings in Sinaloa. The Sinaloa cartel diverts the water from Aguilar's farm to the neighboring one they've recently acquired to grow a large marijuana plantation. Aguilar's father is killed by the cartel, so Aguilar flees north, crossing the border into California where he journeys to Ukiah, a small town two hours north of San Francisco. Ukiah is the type of Northern California town where many people want nothing to do with the marijuana business, legal (medical) or not they believe weed is the gateway drug Reagan said it was and that'll never change. The growers believe they aren't hurting anyone and you'd have to be crazy to not put some plants in the ground (twenty-five legally) and make yourself upwards of four hundred grand cash every year.

Friends of the family have pointed Aguilar in the direction of local business owners Frank Benson (50's) and Moises Osuna (40's) who are partners both in their boutique wine vineyard and in life. But Frank and Moises have a secret-- They operate an illegal weed garden deep in the

federally owned forest behind their vineyard. The spot is well hidden and can only be reached by hiking several miles. In the decade they've been operating it, it's never been spotted by federal agent or wandering hiker. At first, Aguilar thinks he'll be working on the vineyard with Frank and Moises, living with them in their home. After letting Aguilar get his bearings, Frank and Moises take him into the forest and show him where he'll be living for the majority of the next eight months.

Before going into the woods for the grow season, Aguilar meets Maria Jose (early 20's), Mexican born, where she works at a grocery store. Aguilar is infatuated with Maria Jose and can't stop thinking about her, lying awake in his tent at night, with no one to interact with except his garden dog, Ximena. Aguilar can't take it and sneaks back into town to find Maria Jose. She's intrigued by Aguilar but also has reservations considering he's undocumented and is working a weed garden for two men he barely knows. Maria Jose's brother has recently resurfaced and that always means trouble.

The pilot ends with a massive, late Spring rain storm, during which Aguilar thinks he feels his grandmother's spirit and believes she's there to protect him. After raining for two straight days, Aguilar emerges from the tent into the soft, morning light, walking into the garden to inspect the rain's damage on the young crop. As he nears the garden's edge, Aguilar freezes in shock by what he sees underneath a baby marijuana plant-- A tattooed hand sticking up out of the ground. As Aguilar knees to inspect it, he can now read what is written in cursive down the thumb and onto the wrist-- *Sinaloa*.

THEME

One of the major themes I'm exploring is the hypocrisy of the United States government, more specifically the current president and his administration, in their dealings and attitude towards Mexico. To point the finger at Mexico for creating a climate where drug cartels rule the land but not take responsibility for the United State's role in all of it is unfair and even dangerous. We fund an endless drug war that has literally cost the US a trillion dollars but

earned us nothing. This conversation could split off into a thousand directions but specifically for my story and series, I want to examine this relationship between the U.S. and Mexico, or rather the exploitation by the United States whose consumption of these drugs fuels the trafficking. Also what it means for someone like Aguilar to take on the Sinaloa Cartel. Then on a much more micro level I'll be exploring themes of family and love and how a good people can be transformed into something they never desired to become due to circumstances which can't be avoided.

SEASON ONE - EPISODE IDEAS

- Maria Jose's brother Ivan finds out about Aguilar and his garden in the woods. Ivan has a way for Aguilar to make some quick cash, while on the job-- Ivan tries to convince Aguilar that Frank and Moises are taking advantage of him and pitches him an idea-- They team up to steal the harvest from Frank and Moises once it's ready.

- The Elf shows up in Ukiah looking for answers about who killed the Sinaloa cartel drug runner, causing Frank and Moises to be on high alert unsure how much the Elf knows. Aguilar continues to pursue Maria Jose, helping her with a problem and gaining a bit more of her trust.
- Aguilar gets Maria Jose to go out with him on a real date. Moises helps Aguilar prepare and facilitate the date without Frank's knowledge but Frank ends up finding out causing problems for everyone involved.
- The Elf realizes Frank and Moises are the ones who killed his man and war breaks out. It becomes public knowledge that Frank grows weed, he's voted off the city council and sent into a downward spiral. The Elf wants the body and Moises has to lead The Elf and his crew to the garden in the woods knowing Aguilar is there with Maria Jose.

SEASON TWO

Back to Mexico. Aguilar, Maria Jose, Ivan, and Moises travel back to Sinaloa to take back Aguilar's family farm and go after the men who killed his brother.

Appendix B: Revision Outline With Notes

***Still need to rethink Cherry, is he a cop? I like him being a know it all rebel that Frank can't stand but doesn't want to drive MJ away. Hot shot, cowboy cop who likes being on both sides of the law, sees himself as Clint Eastwood. You feeling lucky. He wants to be an action hero, likes the idea of being a hero. He flirts with Jess. Makes fun of Sam.

ACT I

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - SUNRISE

Aguilar and his old brother, Damian deep in the hills working for Tadpole, a very talent grower, employed by the Sinaloa Cartel to produce high quality high door weed.

Tadpole lets them out of the cage at sunrise. He's a particularly bad mood, very stressed about starting the harvest, he tosses them each a can of sardines and snorts a mound of crank from his hand.

Aguilar is really sick and needs to see a doctor/ get antibiotics. Tadpole says he'll have to tough it out until they get all this weed cut, no way he's getting off this grow until after harvest.

Damian tries talking to Tadpole, Tadpole hits Damian in the gut with the butt of his rifle, Damian doubles over, gasping for breath-- Tadpole tells them to stop being pussies and get to work.

They walk into a giant marijuana garden, hundreds of plants, stretching half a football field. Off a huge marijuana leaf...

INT. FRANK'S GARDEN SUPPLY - DAY

Pull back from marijuana leaf under a grow light to reveal we are in a grow store.

Intro MJ (Maria Jose) who runs the store for her dad, Frank. Frank comes into the shop.

A customer, Sam, can't decide on what crystallizer or how much he needs for his sour diesel plants. Frank helps him and calculates how many plants he has by how many bottles Sam buys.

Frank watches Sam leave through the window and scribbles Sam's license plate number down on a pad of paper near the register.

Frank picks up the phone and calls, Officer Curtis, who's in the middle of writing a ticket. Frank tells him 60 pounds of Sour just walked out the door and gives Curtis the license plate number of the truck Sam was driving.

Frank gets distracted and forgets to dispose of the paper with Sam's plate number.

EXT. FOREST GARDEN - DAY

Aguilar and Damian have been working for hours, drenched in sweat. They usually get a break in the afternoon but not today. Tadpole says too much work to be done to get ready for harvest.

Aguilar collapses in the dirt and Tadpole starts yelling at him, kicks him in the gut. Tells him to take some crank, Tadpole puts the white powder on his finger and shoves it in Aguilar's nose-- Snort it!

Damian tackles Tadpole and they roll around on the ground, Damian trying to get Tadpole's rifle-- Tadpole is big and tough and on a bunch of speed, he's gonna kill Damian. Aguilar throws his pair of gardening shears to Damian who runs them through Tadpole's skull just before Tadpole strangles him to death.

Damian has been stabbed, he tells Aguilar to go without him. He won't make it-- Reminds him to make the call.

**Possibly Damian slips in the dirt and goes over the side of the hill. Aguilar musters the energy to go looking for him but can't find him anywhere. Maybe Damian got a concussion in the fall and wandered off instead of

waiting/looking/calling for Aguilar. Either way we won't see Damian again until the last scene.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Curtis and Cherry show up at Sam's house in a police truck dragging a trailer. Curtis says they got a tip they were over the legal amount of plants, sure enough, Sam and his partner Jess are five plants over-- They beg Curtis to leave them with something. Curtis pretends to think it over.

Curtis and Cherry take all thirty plants, leaving Sam and Jess devastated, rain starts beating down on their faces.

EXT. FOREST HILLS - DAY

The rain is coming down strong as Aguilar stumbles from the thick forest, into the base of the hills and into a vineyard. He walks along a fence line at the edge of the vineyard, the rain soaking him, washing the blood down his body and into the earth.

INT. CONCRETE HOUSE - MEXICO - NIGHT

We meet The Elf, he's torturing a man in what is presumably the man's living room, pictures of the man and his children on the walls. The Elf hears something and pauses before breaking another one of the man's fingers.

He goes to the closet where a little boy in his pajamas is hiding. The Elf brings the boy out to stand before his father, who's in agonizing pain.

The Elf tells the little boy the story of how he got his name. Then puts a small gun, a .380 pistol in the boy's hands and tells him to put his father out of his misery. The father nods at his son... The boy raises the gun.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Curtis and Cherry drive down a desolate dirt road-- On the left of the road is the Russian River-- running strong due to the recent rains-- And on the right, a vineyard stretching for hundreds of yards up into the base of the hills.

Curtis pulls the truck over and they un-hitch the twenty foot trailer full of Sam/Jess's weed and drive off.

INT. FRANK'S TRUCK - DAY

Frank and MJ talk in the truck, driving down the same dirt road-- The truck eventually pulls up alongside the trailer Curtis and Cherry just dropped.

Frank and MJ get out of the truck and hook it up to the trailer but Frank can't find the hitches pin that keeps it secured. Fuck, it'll take forty minutes to drive home and back. He'll take the side roads, it should be fine.

INT. FRANK'S TRUCK -- DAY

Frank is driving down the dirt road, it's raining even harder now, he can only see for a few seconds in between -- Frank comes up over a hill, as soon as he can see what's on the other side it's too late-- He slams on the brakes and swerves to miss the guy crossing the road-- Aguilar.

The trailer hitch jumps off the towing ball and rolls to the edge where the road drops off down into the Russian river.

Frank get out and runs after it, trying to stop it from falling over the side, yelling at MJ to help him, who's run over to Aguilar laying in the road.

The trailer goes over the side and is washed downstream by the river.

Frank yanks Aguilar up off the ground so mad he could kill him, "You owe me a hundred and twenty grand, you fucking asshole".

MJ sees Aguilar is bleeding from his stomach and yells at Frank to stop, the guy is hurt. Frank sees the empty sheath on his side, his fingers are stained green,

and smells Aguilar's hands-- Weed. This kid wasn't working in the vineyard. Son of a fucking bitch.

INT. ANIMAL CLINIC - NIGHT

Frank and MJ bring Aguilar to the 24 HOUR animal clinic where Nik works-- She's the only one working the night shift. Aguilar has a nasty cut on his side, only about three inches long but too deep to heal on it's own, he needs a few stitches.

What does she want Frank to do, take him to a doctor. Isn't there something you can do for him?

Nik can't believe Frank would show up asking for a favor. She's been trying to get Frank to help her fix her leaky roof for weeks before the rains started and Frank has been too busy but he has time to play Mother Theresa with this kid, what is Frank up to--

Frank tells her, he's a gardener, he's hurt, he stumbled out of the hills-- Put it together, Nik. Frank has a nose for cash and this kid is sitting on something-- She tells him she wants five grand then. For a couple stitches? For the roof!

Nik's dog licks the blood from the floor where it drips from Aguilar.

INT. ANIMAL CLINIC - NIGHT

Nik finishes stitching up Aguilar's side, now with an IV plugged into his forearm.

Frank asks Aguilar where he came from, growing weed, how big is the garden? Aguilar doesn't answer. Nik tells him to leave him alone, let him rest.

SCENE WITH CURTIS

Curtis coaching his kid at soccer practice or something else but needs story progression. Is Curtis married, girlfriend, a kid or two-- What's his deal?

INT. ANIMAL CLINIC - NIGHT

Frank thanks Nik for helping him, she implies she didn't really have a choice and stresses that Aguilar needs antibiotics first thing in the morning.

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MJ trims weed in the kitchen -- This might be out in the drying shed and Frank tells her Aguilar is sitting on something big, he can feel it, a lot of money. Sam and Jess listening.

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Aguilar wakes up from a crazy dream to find Frank sitting next to him, lighting a joint. Frank wants more information on the garden and how Aguilar got hurt. Aguilar passes out with joint in his hand, Frank takes it, watches Aguilar sleep for a beat, the wheels in his head spinning.

ACT II

INT. CHERYL'S HOUSE - MORNING

Thinking his mother, Cheryl, is at bingo, Frank lets himself into her house to look for antibiotics she bought in Mexico a few years ago. Cheryl, comes out with a shotgun. Frank takes the expired antibiotics.

INT. FRANK'S F250 - DAY

Frank gives Cheryl a ride to the Casino. She hits Frank up for money, just a little until they harvest the garden Frank has in her backyard.

INT. FRANK'S GARDEN SUPPLY - DAY

Sam and Jessica go back into Frank's shop to return the bottles of crystallizer Sam bought. MJ takes a phone call on the shop's landline.

As they waits for MJ to return the money, Jessica notices a pad of paper near the register with their truck's license plate number written on it.

When MJ isn't looking Jessica takes the sheet of paper.

EXT. FRANK'S GARDEN SUPPLY - DUSK

Sam and Jessica wait outside Frank's shop in their little pick up truck, spinning theories and what they should do. She thought it was a little strange they cut everything and took it instead of just burning it like they usually do. Sam is trying to keep her calm but she is really pissed, blames Sam at one point-- How it was his fault?! Why is everything is fault?

MJ closes the shop and Jessica tells Sam to follow her. Sam thinks it's crazy, Jessica tells him to follow her or get out of the truck and walk home... Sam puts the truck in gear.

INT. CASINO - DAY

Cheryl talks with her friend Norman (70's) who has an investment opportunity for her, maybe Frank wants to get in on it, he's got cash to invest, everyone knows that.

***Also Cheryl might not need any more story in this episode, she's been introduced and her story can build more in Episode two

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MJ checks in on Aguilar, brings him some coconut water. He takes more pain pills and they talk. Aguilar tells her Frank is going to ask him to go back up to the garden he was working. MJ knows. ***Possibly this convo is something different-- We get this beat when Aguilar tells Frank he'll take him up to the forest grow before Frank even asks.

Cherry (was Ivers, now combining these characters) shows up to see MJ. Doesn't like she's there alone with Aguilar, what's Frank thinking? MJ assures

him it's fine. Cherry wants MJ to leave with him until Frank gets back. She tells Cherry to leave, he's being ridiculous, she has shit to do.

EXT. ROAD LEADING TO FRANK'S - NIGHT

Sam and Jessica watching as Cherry leaves the property in a cop car-- Jessica told him, she fucking told Sam, the cops and Frank are ripping off his customers.

Sam says he wants to see it, to be sure. He needs to see it in the drying shed if he's going to get revenge.

EXT. FRANK'S PROPERTY - NIGHT

Sam and Jessica creep onto Frank's property and up to the drying shed, it's locked but they can smell the distinct and very strong smell of sour diesel blowing through the air vents.

INT. DRYING SHED - NIGHT

They break in, the little yellow ties they use still hang from several of the weed branches, it's definitely their weed. They turn to go but Frank is pulling into the driveway as they get to the door of the shed.

EXT. FRANK'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Frank gets out of his truck, heads towards the house but suddenly turns and goes into the drying shed, admiring the sour diesel.

Sam and Jessica hide in the back of the shed under a table. Sam takes out a gun. Jessica tells him to hold on.

MJ walks in and starts talking to Frank. Sam/Jess listen-- This Mexican kid is sitting on something big. Hundreds of plants. Yeah, some cartel shit probably, she says. Why do you want to mess with that? Frank assures her it'll be fine. Nothing me and your uncle Curtis can't handle.

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank gives Aguilar the antibiotics and Aguilar offers to take Frank to the forest garden. This might be where Aguilar tells Frank more about his brother and that he needs to bury him. Frank says sure, they'll bury his brother.

INT. SAM AND JESS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sam and Jess livid about what's happened, decide to rip off Frank and Curtis, they can keep their sour diesel-- They're going to take that 500 pound forest grow.

INT. DRYING SHED - NIGHT

Cherry and MJ in the drying shed talking about Frank. She busts his balls, they laugh and Cherry pulls her in for a kiss-- Aguilar watching them from his bedroom window.

***I like Aguilar watching them but need to rethink this scene, if Cherry even still there or if it's even necessary. Maybe Aguilar could just watch MJ trimming in the dim light, admiring her.

INT. FOREST CLUB - NIGHT

Frank meets with Curtis and tells him about the new garden, up in the hills. They need to go soon. Curtis's son has big soccer game Saturday. Sunday then.

***If you think Jessica seeing their license plate written on the scratch pad at Frank's store isn't believable enough -- Another option is that Sam/ Jessica could be drinking in the bar, reeling from earlier, and see Frank and Curtis talking in the booth--

Put it together this way, that they worked together to rob them, then follow Frank home and see their weed in his drying shed-- To know Frank has plan to rob this forest grow, would still need to overhear Frank/ MJ talking about Frank's plan.

INT. NIK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank goes to see Nik on his way home, he has flowers. He doesn't believe she's just mad about the roof. Are you an idiot? Of course I'm not just mad about the roof-- I've hinted about it so many times-- I want a kid! Frank can't recall any of these hints and has no idea where this is coming from. They part ways on even worse terms. Sounds like this relationship is over.

Frank throws down the five grand for the roof and leaves. What a dick.

INT. FRANK'S DRYING SHED - NIGHT

Cherry offers to help Frank with the project up in the hills. At first Frank declines, then says okay after Cherry tells Frank he can pay him what he sees fit or nothing at all. Just wants to help (for MJ of course).

ACT III

EXT. BASE OF HILLS - DAWN

MJ watching Frank gear up. Why's he putting on a vest, he said nobody is up there, why the fuck does he need a bullet proof vest? Frank tells her to relax. Aguilar watching them argue.

She picks up an assault rifle, pops in a clip like she's done it a hundred times (which she has) and says she's coming. Frank says no way. If it's not safe enough for me to come, why are you going? She asks. You raised me like a boy but want to me stay home like a girl-- You're fucked up. Fine, but you're not coming, he tells her. I'll call you as soon as I have service again, wrestles the rifle from her hands and leads Aguilar towards the hills.

EXT. BASE OF THE HILLS - DAWN

Frank introduces Aguilar to Curtis who's there with the mules. Cherry isn't there yet, maybe he's not coming. Curtis asks why Frank didn't tell him they were working with an illegal. Frank didn't realize it was important. Curtis puts a gun to Aguilar's head, tells him he'll kill him if he's fucking them around.

Aguilar is freaked out, looks to Frank for reassurance. Maybe Aguilar says something to Curtis in English, something Tadpole taught him, some phrase.

Just as they head up the hill, into the woods, Cherry shows up, some excuse about why he was late but he's here now, let's get it.

EXT. FOREST HILLS - DAY

They've hiked several miles into the hills and come to a ridge where Aguilar stops, telling Frank it's just another two hundred meters or so ahead. Curtis cuffs Aguilar's hands in front of him, telling Frank he doesn't trust Aguilar.

Frank says they leave the mules there, it'll be more quiet to creep into camp without them, and make sure no one is at the garden. Frank tells Aguilar if there's anything he hasn't told him, now would be the time.

EXT. FOREST CAMP - DAY

Aguilar leads them into the campsite where coyotes feast on Tadpole's corpse. Frank pelts a rock at them and they scatter, leaving Tadpole with a half eaten face and a pair of gardening shears sticking out of his head.

Curtis immediately assumes Aguilar did it and pulls the shears from the dead man's skull. Aguilar tells Frank what happened (in Spanish, only Frank can understand) . Then Cherry sees the cage where Aguilar and his brother were kept at night.

Frank isn't surprised but you can see in his eyes that it affects him, this kid Aguilar has been through a lot. Aguilar confused that his brother isn't there, he was sure his brother was dead. Does this mean he's out there? (or not if Damian went over the hill and Aguilar couldn't find him)

EXT. FOREST GARDEN - DAY

They get to work, cutting the biggest buds first. All of them impressed with the quality of the weed. Aguilar has been taught a valuable skill. Curtis hands Aguilar the shears he took from Tadpole's head, "These belong to you".

EXT. GARDEN FOREST - DAY

They've finished filling all the bags they brought, several hundred pounds of weed. Curtis and Cherry will head back for the mules, leaving Frank and Aguilar alone in the garden with the bagged weed.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

Aguilar can't believe his brother isn't there. Wonders if Frank thinks animals took his brother away. Frank says maybe he's alive, there's plenty of towns just a few miles in every direction.

Aguilar asks for a minute alone to pray to the Mary of Guadalupe statue (it's maybe a foot tall, Tadpole let them bring it, knowing it would be good for their moral). As soon as Frank disappears, Aguilar digs up a six shooter .38 pistol buried underneath the tent in a plastic box. It's loaded and ready to rock.

EXT. FOREST GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Frank stands in the garden alone, this is a great spot to grow-- Gets great sun, hidden well. Maybe Frank should take this spot. Frank hears the patter of feet, thinking it's Curtis and Cherry returning with the mules, he asks, "What took you so long, ya work in a quickie" and he's hit in the face with the butt of a shotgun.

Frank goes down. Lights out, baby.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Aguilar watches from behind a cluster of rocks as Sam and Jessica order Curtis and Cherry to load the bags of weed onto the horses. Frank is tied up on the ground, he wakes up and starts cussing Sam out-- Jessica puts a boot right in Frank's mouth.

Aguilar looks at the gun in his hand, then turns looking down the hill, a clean escape, away from this fucking mess.

EXT. FOREST GARDEN - DAY

The mules are loaded and ready to go. Aguilar gets Frank free somehow. Sam asks Frank, why? You have a shop, your own garden, why you need to rob us? Jess, because they're piece of shit thieves baby. Shoot him. Shoot him in the fucking face. Sam has a hard time, thought it would be easier, Jess will do it. Frank creates diversion, Curtis rushes Sam.

Blap. Sam goes down, Aguilar clips him before he shoots Curtis.

Frank smacks a mule, sending it running, the other three follow it, creating a diversion as Sam isn't sure whether he should go after the mules or keep his gun on Curtis, in that split second where Sam looks to the mules, Curtis rushes him and they fight, even though Curtis's hands are tied, he puts a good fight for a minute-- Jess can't get a good shot on Curtis.

Cherry is scared shitless and freezes up, he's never been in a situation where he wasn't the aggressor, the one in control.

Jessica shoots at Frank, hitting his vest, she thinks she's killed him but Frank gets up before she shoots him again, fighting her for her gun--

Sam has regained control Curtis and is going to shoot him when Aguilar shoots Sam in the back of the head--

**Don't worry, will choreograph this better and it will be a wonderfully satisfying climax.

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - DAY

A badly beaten Jess is thrown into the cage and locked in by Aguilar. Aguilar and Frank have a moment, something, if even just a nod or a handshake.

Curtis finally takes the handcuffs off of Aguilar and thanks him.. For you know.. Let's get the fuck off this hill.

EXT. FOREST - DUSK

They find the mules drinking from a stream, most of the burlap sacks still intact.

Frank knew they wouldn't go far, mules are too domesticated, more loyal than dogs. One licks Frank's face as he pets her.

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MJ and Aguilar talk in the kitchen. Cherry told her what Aguilar did, saving them. Aguilar asks for a can of sardines, he's in luck, she finds one in the pantry. It's hard for Aguilar to hide his crush on her and she's probably starting to pick up on it.

He tells her good night and calls her by her full Spanish name, Maria Jose. This gets her attention as no one else calls her this. She smiles to herself as she walks away.

INT. FRANK'S DRYING SHED - NIGHT

Frank hangs weed in the drying shed. Nik shows up. After some small talk Frank tells her he's afraid to have a son who'll grow up to hate him like he hated his old man.

She kisses him, it escalates and they have sex underneath a million dollars of hanging weed.

EXT. FRANK'S GARDEN - NIGHT

Frank stands alone outside the drying shed smoking a joint. He hears something coming from his garden. Thinking he's being robbed, he takes out his gun and quietly walks through the humongous weed plants until he finds... Aguilar, sitting on the ground, eating from the can of fancy sardines in mustard sauce, looking up at the big, bright moon.

Frank asks Aguilar why he helped them today. Aguilar says to get his ten percent. Then asks Frank for twenty-- Frank will give him fifteen. Aguilar is surprised and asks if he can sleep in the garden tonight.

EXT. FOREST GARDEN - NIGHT

Jess, her face now badly bruised and crusted with dry blood, one eye completely swollen shut, is woken up to a flashlight shining on her. It's the Elf, a cigarette hanging from his lip, several of his men... And Damian, who although appears to be hurt, is very much alive.

The Elf wants to know what happened to his weed. Jess looks at him with her one eye that barely opens and asks him if he's cartel. He tells her Sinaloa. She tells the Elf she used to get four thousand dollars a pound, now she's lucky to get two. Does he know who's fault that is? The cartels flooded the market with massive guerilla grows, fucking everything up. The cartels can go fuck themselves and so can the Elf.

Elf finds a bottle of lighter fluid near the fire pit, empties it on Jess and throws his cigarette in her face-- She goes up in flames, burning in the cage, all the men watching with pleasure, all except Damian, who covers his nose from the smell of burning flesh.

The Elf extends his gun to Damian, like he did with the little boy and the .380, and tells Damian he should put her out of her misery if it bothers him so much.
***Has tadpole got them hooked on crank to control them? They stick with him to stay high, crank is highly addictive and helps to pass the time when isolated. Real popular in prison.

***As soon as he got the word they were a go, Frank put a deal in motion, his buyers from AZ. They'll be there tomorrow. These guys pay 30% more since they're out of state and they buy a lot. Frank does not want to lose them as customers, they're from a state that will not be legalizing weed any time soon.

***Nik needs invitro, they've had two sessions so far and it isn't taking. 15k a pop, this could be a hundred grand before it's all said and done. They need to find a surrogate, she's going to cost 50k plus all her medical expenses. Aguilar knows someone, a woman in Mexico. She would do it for much less.

***ICE picks up Aguilar. Curtis lets him out of jail for saving his life. MJ marries Aguilar.

***Should Jess and Sam be two gay men instead? Maybe one in his 50's and the other in his 30's. More like Randy and Jake were but partners instead of father/son.

***Look for earliest opportunity to show Frank has his own garden.

***Sam is having a hard time with it, it's different talking about killing someone when you're all mad but now it's much harder to actually do it. Jess tells him to shut the fuck up, she'll do it. Then Aguilar shoots Sam.

NOTES 4/27/17

No opening fight scene with Frank-- Opening is Frank and Sam talking in the shop. MJ late for work, hanging out with Cherry.

Phone call to alert Elf he needs to come to Ukiah, eating dinner while someone is dying or eating a sandwich.

No more Santa Muerte

Frank tells Jess he's going to call her sister and then if he ever sees her again, he'll kill her. Stands up to Curtis, this is how this goes down. She's sorry. She didn't even like Sam all that much-- It was all his idea.

Cut the detective work scenes with Sam and Jess. Just them following Frank, got your license plate now motherfucker. Next time we see them, they're coming out of the woods robbing them.

Bibliography

Anderson, Bruce. 2012. Behind the Green Curtain: True Crime Stories from Mendocino County. CreateSpace.com. Print.