



The Ballad of
RESTLESS
RYDER

Written by
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The Ballad of Restless Ryder

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CAST, in order of appearance

- Ryder 40 something drifter, handyman
- The old woman wife of Viejo
- Viejo old man of the Puebla community
- The Speaker Speaker of the State Assembly
- Assemblyman Johnson member of State Assembly
- Kate 30 something single mom, love interest of Ryder
- Little Mike son of Kate, 8 – 10 years old
- Big Mike 60 something father of Kate
- Joe 20 something grandson of Viejo
- The Temptress the flame that attracts moths and men
- The Mayor Mayor of the town of New Hope
- Red, Jeff, Sam townspeople of New Hope
- Manuel friend of Joe
- Miguel Vargas father of Maria
- Senora Vargas mother of Maria
- Maria 20 something girlfriend of Joe

TIME: Present

PLACE: The rural hill country in southern Colorado or northern New Mexico. The 2 towns, Puebla (subsistence farmers and labor for New Hope) and New Hope (for-profit farms and ranches) are located beside a large river.

Musical Numbers

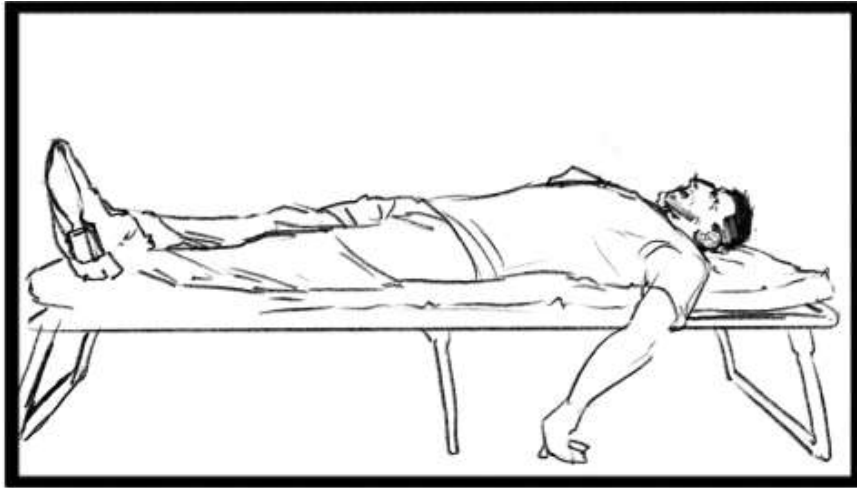
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ACT ONE

Scene One

Opening scene shows children playing in the dirt in the front of an old adobe house. Their voices are clear and bright.





The scene slowly shifts to a darkened, dimly lit room and the sound of children's voices fades.

In the room is a cot. On the cot is an unconscious man.

The man on the cot is Ryder.





The scene then shifts to hill country. Ryder is reliving recent past in a dream state.



Ryder is standing on a steep ridge fixing a fence.



(1. South Wind) A child's voice is heard singing the choruses.

The part of the fence he is working on is on a steep slope. A big gust of wind (the North Wind) causes him to lose his footing.

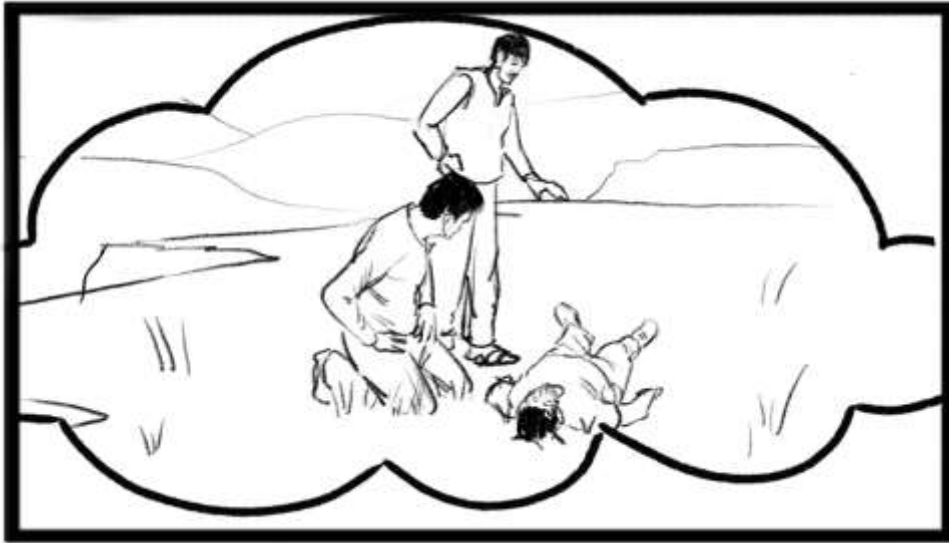


The music stops when he loses his footing and slides down the hill approximately 5 feet, hitting his head and eventually lying unconscious.

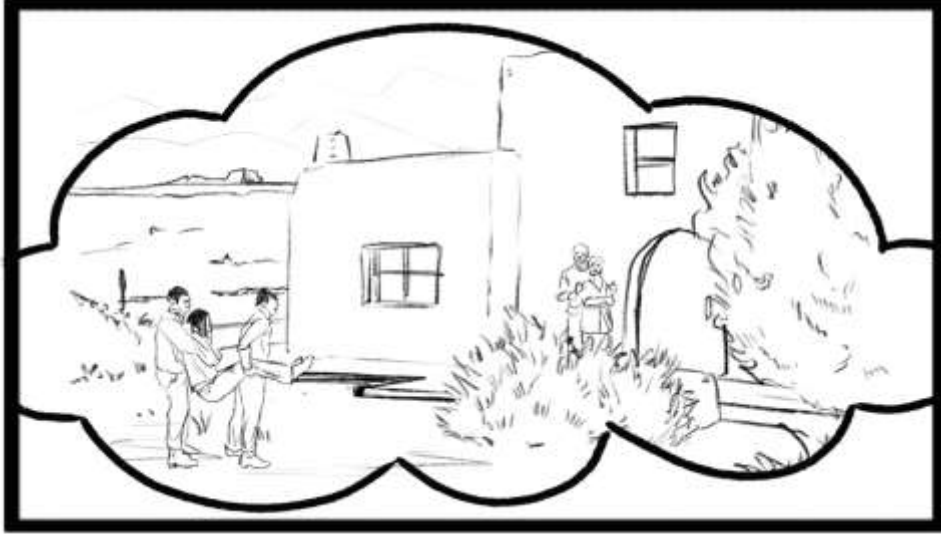
5-10 second delay



A thief finds the unconscious Ryder and robs him of his tools, other supplies and his wallet. The face of the thief is not easily visible because of a hat.

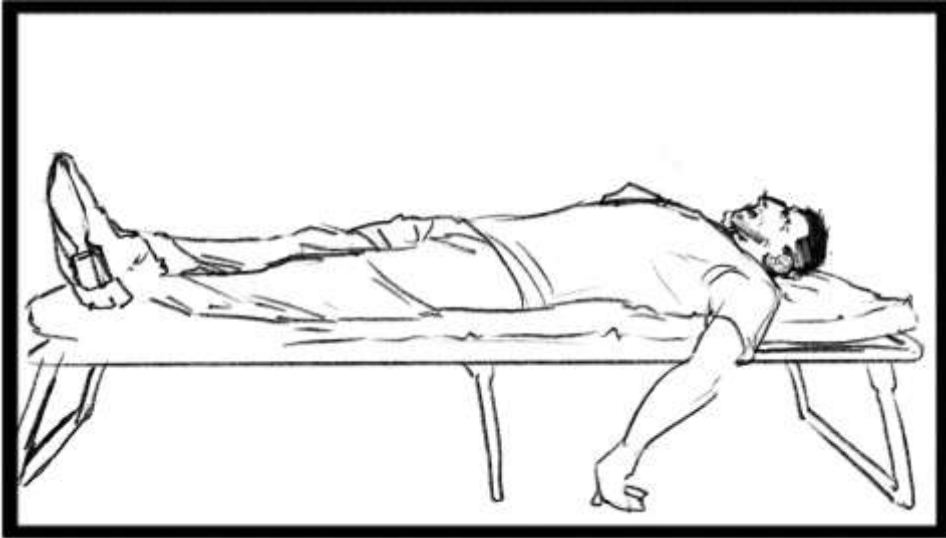


Later, two men, who look to be Latinos, wearing dusty work clothes, find the unconscious Ryder and take him away off stage.



Ryder's voice, but from offstage, sings (2. [North Wind](#)).

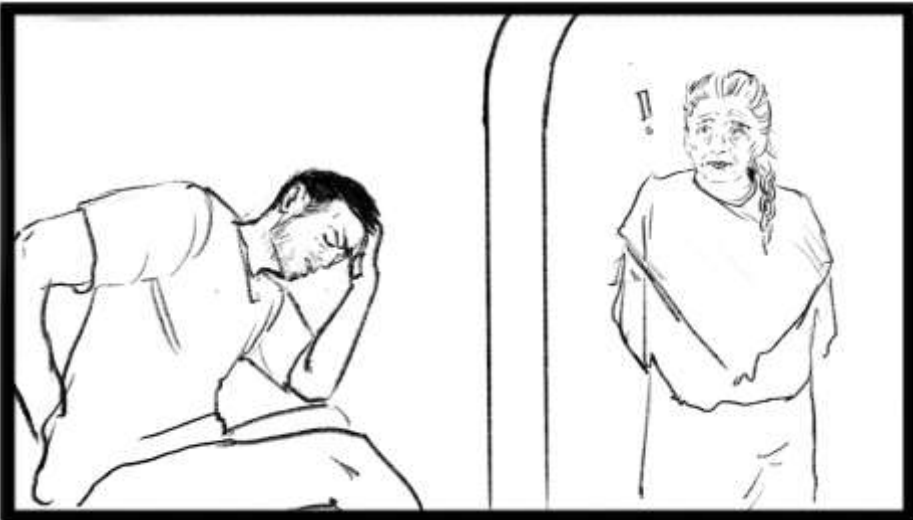
The stage light increases to show the two men carrying Ryder toward a house. An old man and woman are standing outside the house.



The scene shifts to the darkened, dimly lit room. The room has a cot upon which the unconscious Ryder is laying. The offstage Ryder voice and the children's voice sing the last choruses. The Ryder voice alone sings the end of the song " . . . of my nightmare . . ."



As Ryder on the cot begins to move and wake up. He groans. The old woman, who looks to be of Mexican decent, goes to bring the old man.





The old man, Viejo, who looks to be of Mexican decent, comes into the room and sends the woman away. He moves to Ryder's bedside. He occasionally coughs. He seems ill.

Viejo

Can you hear me?

Ryder

(Groans)

Yes, yes I hear you. My head hurts.

Viejo

We will not talk long now. You were found in the hill country by my people. You were brought to me because they did not know who you were and the nearest town is more than 50 miles away. You have no identification with you.

Ryder

My name is Ryder. I had things with me – a truck, my wallet.

Viejo

There was nothing with you when you were found. We will take care of you for now.

(The old man motions for the old woman to return.)

Ryder

I heard children?

Viejo

Yes, the village children come here to play sometimes. Rest and we will talk again.

ACT ONE

Scene Two



(Open on the old man standing at the edge of the stage, gazing into the distance. The old man has a coughing fit. The old woman is not far off working some cloth with her hands. She gets up and starts to walk toward the old man when he coughs. He stops coughing and motions her away.)

Ryder approaches from offstage. The old man speaks without looking at Ryder.)

Viejo

You are feeling better.

(He pauses as he looks at Ryder closely. He makes a decision.)

It is time for you to leave.

Ryder

Yes, I am better. I'm sorry if I was trouble for you these past few days.

Viejo

You needed help. We were able to help you.

Ryder

I really appreciate it. Do you know where I can find the people who brought me here? I would also like to thank them. And I want to ask them if they know anything about my things that were stolen. If I can get my things I can pay you for your trouble.

Viejo

I know who they are, but I do not know where you may find them. You do not need to thank

them. No one wants a dead man lying around to attract the attention of the law.

Ryder

(Lets out a snort.)

Why, is there smuggling, or something else illegal going on around here?

Viejo

(The old man looks at Ryder. He coughs a few times.)

There are no illegal activities, at least none so important to interest the law. But still it is best for us not to attract too much attention.

(The old man looks away into the distance.)

I came to this land as a young man, many years ago. There was already a small community of immigrant laborers, called Puebla, by the river. Some of the people

farmed the land and lived off it as best they could. Others traveled to work in the closest towns and stayed there most of the year. Not much has changed for that community. It is very remote, and so does not draw much attention.

We have other things to discuss. How will you travel? You have no vehicle and no money.

Ryder

And I don't have anyone to call for money. I am a pretty good handyman. Maybe I can find some work around here. I could pay you some money for the help you gave me.

Viejo

(The old man motions with his arms in a sweeping gesture in front of him.)

You do not have the look of a farmer. So there is very little work you could do for

money in this country. From you I do not need any payment of money.

Ryder

Well then, it seems I'm stuck!

(Ryder kicks the dirt and walks around a few steps. The old man turns to watch him. Ryder eventually stops and looks at the old man.)

Viejo

You do have a debt to me. You will pay me.

Ryder

(Flings his arms out.)

How am I supposed to do that?

Viejo



I have done all I can for Puebla, as advisor, *consejero*, providing guidance, but I am now very old.

(The old man points to a part of the stage that now lights up to show an old motorcycle.)

Ryder

(Ryder moves over to the motorcycle to inspect it.)

Nice bike.

(Ryder straddles the bike, testing it for balance.)

Viejo

You will take that and travel south. I will come for you when it is time for you to help my people.

(The old man coughs and wheezes. Ryder watches him recover.)

Ryder

What do you mean, “help my people.”

Viejo

Puebla is built on public land, not owned by any one person who lives in this country.

Because of that the people are left mostly alone. But every so often other people come and cause us trouble. Some of the people of Puebla move away, but eventually they return again.

The river provides for us. The land that is farmed is irrigated using the river. The people fish in the river. But sometimes the river turns against the people and there is flooding.

Life is already difficult for my people, but now the world is becoming a much more dangerous place. There will always be people in the world that would use terror to try and get what they want. Because of this the damage of any attack is only part of the terror. It causes fear of strangers or anything foreign.

(The old man looks away again.)

I will not live much longer. My people will need someone to help them, counsel them, and lead them.

(The old man points his cane at Ryder.)

You will help when it is time.

Ryder

You are crazy!

(Ryder gets off the motorcycle and stands beside it.)

Viejo

(The old man walks slowly over to Ryder, speaking as he goes.)

Ryder, what is your life? Is it just to drift like the wind? As you have been doing? You have no direction in your life, do you, no purpose?

Ryder



Hey, old man. I think you are getting a little personal. That stuff is none of your business. My life is good, because it is my life. No one owns me and I am free to do as I like. What makes you think you know me anyway?

Viejo

I saved your life. I have the right to, “get a little personal,” with you. I have seen you, or the likes of you, my whole life. Irresponsible! Negligent of your life and what it can mean for you and others.

You think you are completely independent of others, don't you? Are you truly? If it were not for some friendly strangers you would probably be dead right now.

(The old man moves toward and looks closely at Ryder. Ryder is uncomfortable under his stare.)

There have been times in your life when you were tempted to settle down, but you did not. You ran away, thinking you could leave your responsibilities behind. But you can never leave behind your responsibility to yourself. I ask you, do you truly love your life?

Ryder

(Finally he looks at the old man and meets his stare.)

Alright, it is not a perfect life. I have no one but myself.

(Defiantly)

But it is my life! I will not have anyone try to mold me in their own image, to control me. And in my experience that is what people always try to do.

Viejo

(He coughs. With a slight knowing smile he speaks.)

People? Or do you mean those who are allowed to get close to you? Perhaps you expect things to always remain the same? But they never remain the same, do they?

Ryder

(Looking away, thoughtfully)

No, they don't.

(Looking back to the old man.)

But it is none of your business and I don't want to talk about it.

Viejo

Being with someone in a relationship, man or woman, means compromise is inevitable, if the relationship is to survive. A relationship must grow and evolve. Perhaps you were not

willing to compromise. Instead, you gave up. You have no idea what you lost because you never really tried. But perhaps now you begin to realize that. A near death experience will do that to a person.

Ryder

Perhaps. But I am not willing to compromise just yet.

(Realizing the old man's insistence to "help his people.")

And I do not intend to wait around here. You will have to get someone else to help you out. I am not ready to take on the responsibility of a whole community.

(Ryder starts to move away from the old man.)

Viejo

Don't walk away from me!

(The old man coughs twice, then pauses.)

You are needed.

Ryder

(He looks back.)

You can't need me that much. You already said I can't do much of anything around here.

Viejo

(The old man shakes his fist at Ryder and speaks in a raised voice.)

I will come for you and you will help my people!



(The old man begins coughing and slumps to the ground. The old woman rushes to the old man's side and holds his head. Ryder approaches them and looks on.)

Ryder

What's wrong with you?

Viejo

The end is here.

(He closes his eyes.)

Old Woman

Viejo!



(The old man opens his eyes. The old woman looks into his eyes.)

Viejo!

(The old man dies in her arms. The old woman cries, and hugs the old man for a while, and then points at Ryder.)

You, go now! Go! Go before I summon men to chase you off!

Ryder

(Ryder hesitates, then goes to the motorcycle, starts it, and rides off stage.)



ACT ONE

Scene Three

(The setting is the state capitol building. The time is approximately 9 months after Ryder left the land where the old man and woman lived.

The state legislature is in session. The Assembly room has rows of chairs and desks with the elected Assembly officials seated at them. At the front of the room is a speaker's lectern. Behind the lectern is a large, raised desk where the Speaker of the Assembly is seated.

The Assembly has been in session for an extended period this day, locked in a heated debate regarding the controversial Safe Borders Act. The Act, if voted to pass, will enable the state to enlarge the scope of its

efforts regarding illegal passage across the state border. Everyone is tired. At the lectern speaking is a tall distinguished looking gentleman approximately 50 years old. His name Johnson. The Speaker raps his gavel to quiet the Assembly.)

Speaker

Order! Order! Assemblyman Johnson has the floor.

Johnson

Thank-you. Mr. Speaker. I address this fine Assembly realizing we are all very tired and wish to wrap up this important business.

(General grumbling from the Assembly with some scattered applause.)

We have all heard the arguments for and against passage of the Safe Border Act. Our federal government seems paralyzed to take

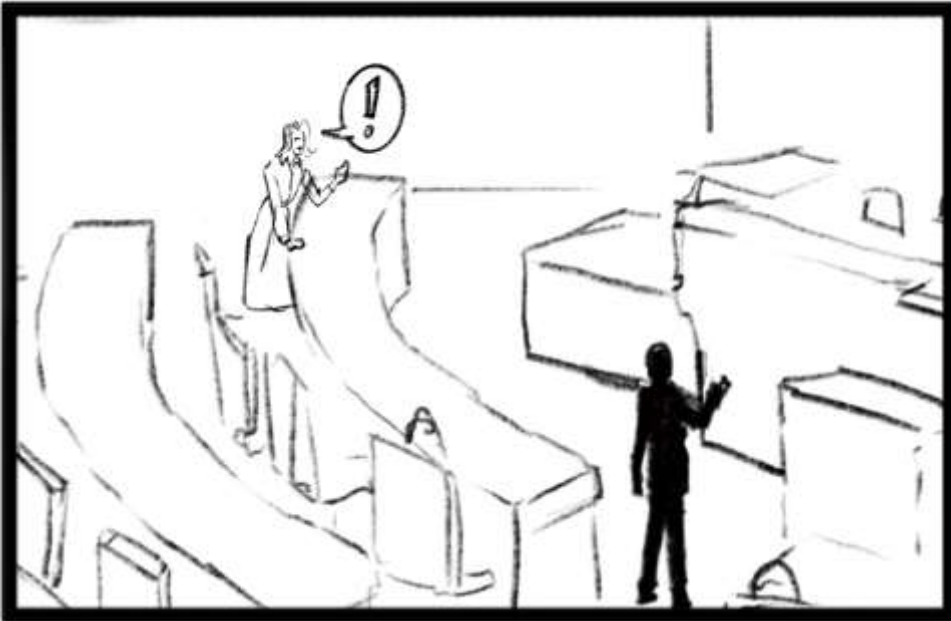


action in any worthwhile aspect of our state's plight. On a daily basis thousands of people come across our borders illegally. Illegally! You must all realize that.

(Louder grumbling with some shouting, pro and con.)

Let me continue. I am sure the majority of these people are well meaning workers who want nothing, but a better life for themselves and their families. I don't disagree with that point. But, ladies and gentlemen, it is still patently illegal. Illegal, I say! We are a nation of laws. We must uphold the law. If not, then we face a certain, eventual breakdown of our society, both from a security standpoint, and an economic standpoint.

(Most of the people present in the room stand up and begin to march in single file



around the room. They chant, “Stop the illegal flood!” [\(3. Stop the Illegal Flood\)](#)

Johnson

I urge the passage of the Safe Borders Act to save our society. Stop the illegal flood across our borders!

(Shouts of “Yes,” “Save our society,” “Hypocrites,” “Fascists,” fill the room as the Speaker pounds his gavel for order.)



ACT ONE

Scene Four

(Open on a living room area with a fire burning in a fireplace. It is raining outside. Ryder and Kate are sitting on the couch. She is a few years younger than he is. They are holding wine glasses. Ryder is making a toast.)

Ryder

To us; 6 months of putting up with each other and now, for the past couple of weeks, living together. The future is bright.

Kate

(Laughing.)

Well, isn't that the most romantic thing I've ever heard.

Ryder

(Ryder takes her hand.)

Aw, Kate. You're a special person. And you know I care for you. I am so lucky I found you. I feel good here. It feels right to me. We have a connection.

Kate

(She removes her hand from his and gets up and talks with mock seriousness.)

Why shouldn't you? You've done a good job for us. We need people who can hold their own on a construction site. A small business like ours depends on having good workers. I know my dad appreciates all your hard work.

Ryder

Alright, Kate. You think I'm a good worker. Thanks. Give me some slack, will you? It still feels weird, sometimes, that I'm dating my

boss. You don't know how different things are for me now.

(He shakes his head.)

I can hardly believe it myself. I always felt that I was on the run. I never planned to stay here in this town for long. Just long enough to get some money together then hit the road again. That was my life.

Then, there you were. An independent woman, in complete command of her life. Not needing someone else, but still open to that possibility. You are a rare person, Kate.

Kate

(She sits back down and takes his hand, looks deep into his eyes and smiles.)

I am very happy you are here.

(short pause)

(Kate sits up and states in a matter-of-fact tone)

And I doubt any one is in complete control of their life. That would rule out chance, wouldn't it? I am not a naïve person. I've had some bumps and bruises. The fact I am a single mom should say enough about that.

(After a short pause)

And speaking of the mom part, I know Little Mike is glad you're here, too.

Ryder

Your son. He's a good kid. It's nice you named him after your dad, Big Mike.

Kate

(Laughing.)

Thanks. Not too many people call him that anymore.

Ryder

I think it's great. It's a tribute to both of them.

Kate

Dad has been good for him.

I know Little Mike has been a little distant. I know he wants to trust you, but he is unsure. The only family man in his life has been my dad. But he will be OK. We haven't rushed into anything. And I know he likes you.

Ryder

And I haven't pushed him. I won't pretend to be his father when I'm not. I'm happy to be the nice guy his mom is spending time with. Soon, though, I hope we can get closer.

(Shaking his head again)

Hmm, closer; I can't believe that came out of my mouth. Kate, I have to admit something

to you. I am feeling a little strange about my feelings.

(He looks at her)

Maybe I am rushing into this. I'll probably screw it up with Little Mike.

Kate

It's OK, Ryder. Please just remember no one is forcing anything on you. Just be his friend and he will be yours. No more than that.

I'm sure you two will, in due time become closer. Remember also, he doesn't know his father. That's a good thing, I guess, for now. His father didn't want me to keep Little Mike.

And I haven't seen any trace of that man since Little Mike was born.

(She gets up.)

I'm going to get some more firewood. Be right back.

(She exits out a door in the living room next to the fireplace.)

Ryder

(Ryder moves nearby the fireplace and turns on an old radio.)

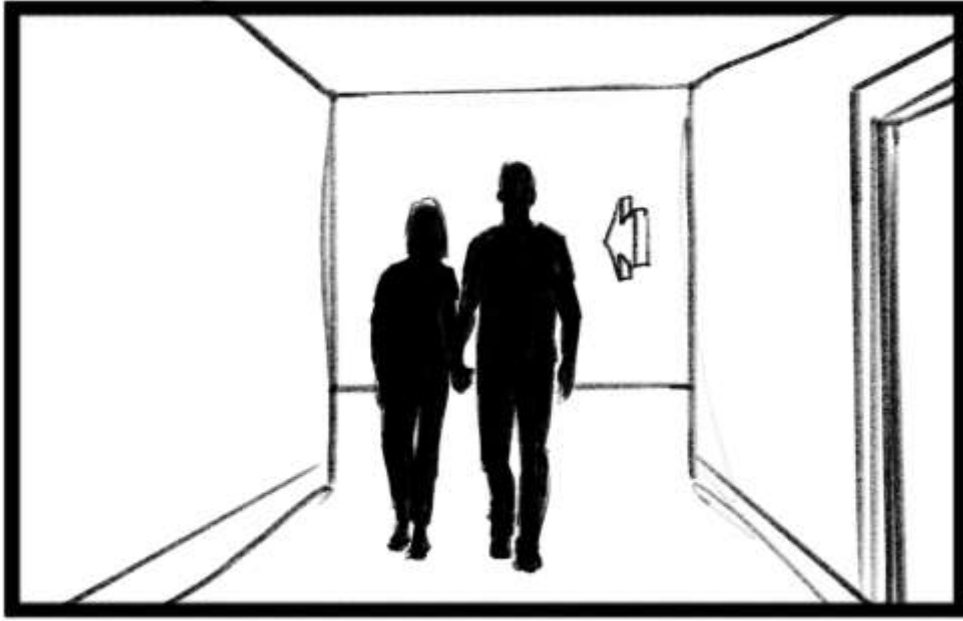




(The music seems to come from the radio with the characteristic old radio sound. Then the sound attains better quality for the song.)

[\(4. Atmosphere\)](#) Ryder sings. Kate enters with the wood after the second verse [. . . @ *Embers stirrin' . . .*] and during the instrumental. She joins Ryder for remainder of the song.)

(After the song ends Kate and Ryder hold hands and move to a darkened part of the stage in the direction of the bedroom.)



The Radio

Storms are striking the northern part of the state and flooding is expected. In other news, the legislature just passed the highly controversial bill; commonly known as the Safe Borders Act, by a slim margin.

ACT ONE

Scene Five

(It is still nighttime. Ryder is visited in his dreams by an apparition of the Old Man, Viejo. The apparition hovers above the bed where Ryder and Kate are sleeping.)



Viejo

Ryder! Ryder! I have come for you. It is time for you to help my people. Ryder!

Ryder

(Ryder tosses and turns in bed.)

What? What is it? Who are you?

Viejo

You know who I am. I have come for you. It is time to repay your debt. You must travel north, back to the land of my people.



Ryder

(Ryder gets out of the bed and faces the old man.)

I am through wandering. And I'm not running errands for people like you. Leave me alone.

Viejo

Ryder, listen to me carefully. You will find no peace in your life until you repay your debt.

(Repeated with sound fading.)

You will find no peace in your life until you repay your debt. You will find no peace in your life until you repay your debt. No peace in your life . . . No peace in your life . . .

(The apparition fades away. Ryder gets back into bed, troubled.)



ACT ONE

Scene Six

(It is morning. Kate wakes up before Ryder. She stretches and sings. ([5. Loving You](#) (is as Easy as Breathing Air))



Ryder wakes and sees her looking down on him. She greets him with a kiss.)

Kate

I'm going to make us breakfast. I'll be quick so don't stay in bed too long.



(She moves off into the kitchen and gets to work. Both she and Ryder can be seen now. Ryder looks troubled as he gets up and puts on some clothes. He seems to make up his mind about something and goes into the kitchen and sits down at the table.)



Ryder

Kate, I have to talk to you, tell you something more . . .

(emphasize the word “more.”)

about what happened to me before we met.

Kate



(She brings over two mugs of coffee and sits down. She is concerned for him because he looks troubled, but she is a happy person and it shows.)

Ryder

I told you about the accident I had, that I was injured, robbed of everything I owned, and that an old man and woman cared for me until I was well enough to travel. They gave me that motorcycle I have now. It was very generous, almost unbelievable.

Kate

Yes, I know all that. They were very good to you.

Ryder

What I didn't tell you was that on the day I left them, the old man died. Right in front of me. Right in the old woman's arms.

Kate

What? That's terrible!

Ryder

It was terrible. That old woman yelled at me to leave, like it was my fault the old man died. I did leave, right then, and never looked back.

Kate

Ryder, she was very upset. She was all alone.

Ryder

Kate, there's more. Before he died, that old man made sure I understood I owed him a debt of service. He didn't want money. He wanted something from me that I can never pay back. I don't even know what it means. And now he wants it, now!

Kate

What are you talking about?

Ryder

He spoke to me last night, like in a dream. But it wasn't a dream, it was real. He said I have to travel north to help his people.

Kate

What? Ryder, you're sounding crazy. Calm down a minute. Come on, in a dream? I'm sure that's all it was. A bad dream. It had to be. I didn't hear anything last night, except your snoring, of course.

(She gets up to finish preparing breakfast.)

Ryder

(A little mollified.)

Aw, Kate. Now you're making fun of me. I know it sounds crazy. It sounds crazy to me,



too. But, you need to know it really affected me.

Kate

(Seriously)

Yes, I can tell. But it's over now, Ryder.

Come on, let's eat. I've got some errands to run before I get to the work site.



The Radio

(The radio is heard playing.)

The expected storms have begun to strike the northern part of the state. In other news various concerned citizen groups responded to the recently passed “Safe Borders Act” by saying it was not the proper way to deal with the illegal immigration problem. They went on to say that “Fear Mongers” in the legislature were threatening to make the problem worse by providing an opportunity for vigilante groups to flourish in the state. Under extreme pressure from the majority party and conservative lobbyists, the governor is expected to sign the Act into law this week.



ACT ONE

Scene Seven

(It is late afternoon. Ryder is outside of the house, working on a small plumbing project. There is very little snow left and it is a pleasant early spring day.

Little Mike walks up and greets Ryder.)

Little Mike

Hi, Ryder. What ya doin'?

Ryder

Well, hi there Little Mike. I'm doing plumbing. You've seen me do plumbing before, over at Mrs. Longworth's house.

Little Mike

Yeah, I guess so.

(He watches Ryder for a little while.)

I like to watch you work. Can I help?

Ryder

Sure. Hand me that pipe wrench there.

(Ryder points, Little Mike hands it to him.)

Little Mike

Ryder? Can I ask you a question?

Ryder

(Without looking at Little Mike.)

Sure.

Little Mike

You like my mom, don't ya?

Ryder

(Stops working and looks at Little Mike, then speaks in a serious tone.)

Mike, I really like your mom a lot.

Little Mike

(Thoughtfully.)

Yeah. And my mom likes you, too, don't she?

Ryder

Yes. Yes she does.

Little Mike

(He bends down and fingers the dirt. Ryder watches for a short time, and then goes back to his work. Little Mike looks up and smiles. He says softly.)

Well, I guess that's OK.

(Louder.)

Ryder, can I ask you a question?

Ryder

Yeah?

(He starts to pack up his tools.)

Little Mike

I was wonderin' if you could come with me to my Cub Scout meetin'.

(Ryder stops working and looks at Little Mike.)

Its next week and Mom said I could ask you. My den is goin' to do a skit. It should be fun.

Ryder

Little Mike, I'd love to. I don't think I've ever been to something like that.

Little Mike

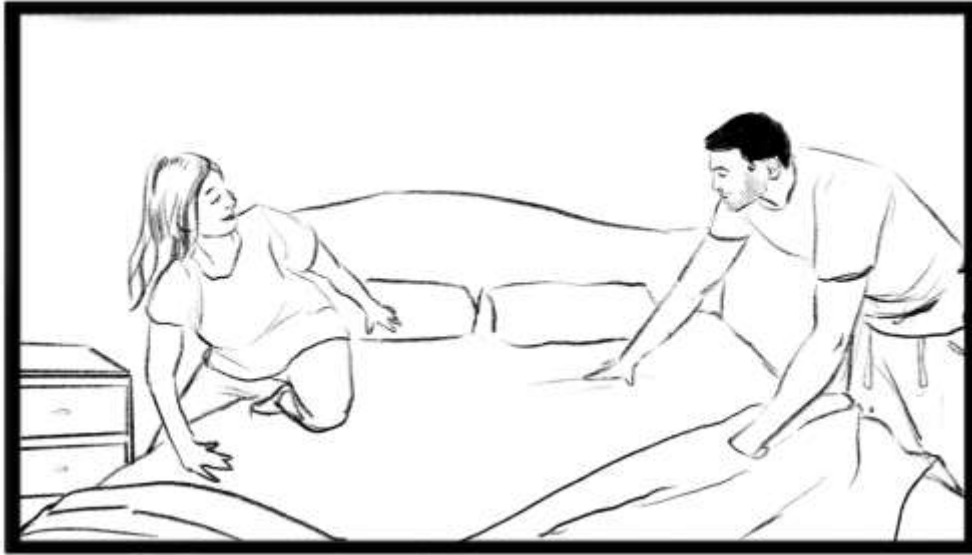


(Smiling)

Great!

(He runs away calling.)

Mom! Mom! He said he's goin' to come to my meetin'!



ACT ONE

Scene Eight

(Lights up showing Ryder and Kate getting into bed.)

Kate

Little Mike told me about you coming to his Cub Scout meeting. See, I think he is starting to warm up to you.

Ryder

Little Mike is a great kid. You've done a good job raising him, Kate.

Kate

Well, it hasn't been exactly easy. He is a real handful at times.

Ryder

Maybe I can help a little.

Kate

(She smiles at him and kisses him.)

Good night, Ryder.

Ryder

Good night, Kate.

(Five second pause.)

(The apparition of the old man, Viejo, appears and speaks to Ryder.)

Viejo

Ryder! Ryder! I have come for you. It is time for you to help my people. Ryder!

Ryder

(Ryder tosses and turns in bed.)

What? What is it?

Viejo

Ryder! Ryder! I have come for you. It is time for you to help my people. Ryder! It is time to



repay your debt. You must travel north back to the land of my people.

Ryder

(Ryder tosses and turns in bed and moans.)

No. No.

Viejo

Ryder, listen to me carefully. You must leave and travel north. There is a storm and it threatens my people.

(More forcefully)

There is a storm and it threatens my people!
You must help. You are needed. You will find no peace in your life until you repay your debt.

(repeated with sound fading)

You will find no peace in your life until you repay your debt. You will find no peace in your life until you repay your debt. No peace in your life . . . No peace in your life . . .

(The apparition fades into the dark background.)

Ryder

(Ryder gets out of the bed screaming)

Get out of my head! Leave me alone!

Kate

(The noise wakes up Kate.)

Ryder, what is it?

Ryder

(Moaning and holding his head in his hands.)

The old man. The old man.

Kate



What old man? There is no one here except us. Ryder, did you have another dream?



Ryder

Not a dream, a nightmare. I know it won't stop. He is in my head and won't leave me alone unless I do what he wants.

Kate

Ryder, forget about it. Just relax and go back to sleep. It's only been two nights. You'll be OK.

Ryder

No, Kate. It's been happening on and off for about a month. But now it is much more intense. When he is here I am filled with the

power of his intent. When he is gone I cannot think of anything except that I must repay my debt. He is right. I will not have any peace unless I do what he wants.

But what is it he wants? Just to travel north to his people? What am I supposed to do? He mentioned a storm is coming. How can I stop that?

(Ryder puts his head in his hands and moans.)

Kate

Oh, dear.

(She puts her arms around him.)

I can't believe that a ghost of a dead old man is actually telling you to leave here. I know you must feel bad about how he died. And maybe you feel you owe a debt because they helped you. But this is coming from you, not

a ghost. This is your guilt talking, however misguided it is, not an old man who is dead. Can't you see that?

Ryder

(Looking up and into the distance.)

You don't believe me. And I don't blame you. I know it sounds crazy.

(Ryder now looks at Kate.)

Whether it is coming from me, or from a ghost, I will not have any peace until that debt is paid.



ACT ONE

Scene Nine

(Lights up on the kitchen in Kate's house. Kate is talking on the phone to her father. He is seen talking back to her from another part of the stage)

Kate

Dad, I am worried about Ryder. He is acting very strange lately. He has been having nightmares.

Big Mike

Nightmares? That doesn't sound too serious. He's a big boy. He'll get over it.

Kate

I'm not so sure. I think they are connected with that injury he had when he was living up north. He was up this morning before me and is out working on that motorcycle of his. He packed up some of his stuff into his backpack. It looks like he is leaving.

Big Mike

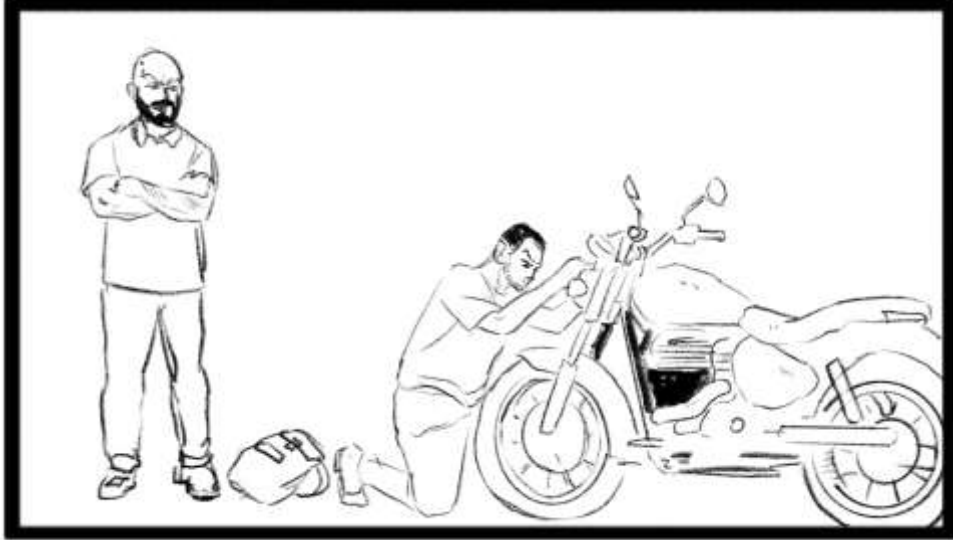
What? Just like that? I'll be right over to speak with him.

Kate

Thanks, Dad.

(They both hang up their phone.)

Big Mike



(Big Mike gets to where Ryder is kneeling, working on his bike getting it ready for a trip. The backpack is strapped to the back of the bike.)

Hello, Ryder.

Ryder

(He looks up to Big Mike from his work. He doesn't smile, but acknowledges Big Mike.)

Hello, Mike.

Big Mike

(He assesses Ryder, the bike and the backpack.)

You look troubled, Ryder. And it looks like you are going on a trip. What's going on?

Ryder

(Not looking up from his work.)

I have to leave. For awhile. I don't know how long. I'm going up north.

Big Mike

Whoa. Slow down. You don't have to run off. Whatever problems you have, or had in the past, we can work them out together. You belong here, with Kate and Little Mike.

Ryder

(Facing Big Mike.)

Mike, you don't know how glad I am to hear you say that. Kate and Little Mike mean a lot



to me. I want to be here for them. But no one understands. No one can understand. I have no choice. If I want to have a normal life I have to take care of something; a debt I have to repay.

Big Mike

Ryder, come on. I've had my share of scrapes, believe me. It never helps to run away from problems. They just run with you. It's the support of loved ones that helps you get past them.

Ryder

(Standing up and wringing his hands)

No, you don't understand. The old man won't leave me alone until I have repaid my debt. I must find out what it is I have to do and finish it. It's my only hope for peace of mind.

(Ryder turns to leave.)

Big Mike

Ryder, wait.

(Ryder turns back to look at Mike.)

Can't we talk about this, man to man? Tell me what this is all about. Let me understand why you are doing this. Let me know that this hasn't all been a big lie.

Ryder

Mike, I can't explain so you will understand. I don't understand! All I know is that I am haunted because I have a debt to pay. All I know is that I have a direction, north. All I know is that I can't be myself until I settle this debt.

(Talking slower and with great intensity.) All I know is that I love your daughter, but I can't be with her now.

Big Mike

Have you told her that? That you love her?

(Ryder just shakes his head and turns away.)

Ryder, you know Kate won't insist you stay. She would never stand in your way. Do you know how rare that is? Very rare, Ryder. I couldn't believe it when she first took up with you! But she has an ability to see the best in people. And I'm glad she did, for your sake.

(Big Mike balls his hands into fists.)

But don't you dare break Kate's heart. You'll answer to me for that.

Ryder

(Ryder turns and looks at Big Mike.)

Mike, I would never hurt Kate on purpose. She is the best person I have ever met.



(He then turns back to the bike, packs up the small toolkit and stows it in the backpack that is strapped on the bike.)

If I don't take care of this I won't be any good to anyone, Kate included.

Kate

(She runs up to where Ryder and Big Mike are at. She looks at the bike and backpack.)

Ryder, what is this? Are you leaving me?



Ryder

Kate, I have to go. I'll be back, sometime, if you'll have me again.

(He pushes the bike to another part of the stage away from Kate and Big Mike. Kate follows. She starts to cry.)

(Stage lights dark to where Ryder and Kate are moving.)



(Big Mike sings, ([6. Father's Lament](#)))



(After song stage lights dark where Big Mike is and up where Ryder and Kate are standing.)

(Kate is crying.)

Ryder

(He gets on the motorcycle.)

Kate, tell Little Mike I'm sorry I won't make his Cub Scout meeting. I'm sorry I won't be here for you, but I'm needed up north.



Kate

You're needed here!

Ryder

(He starts the motorcycle and rides off stage.
He yells back to Kate.)

I'll miss you, Kate!

Kate

(Softer)

You're needed here.

(She continues to cry and sings, ([7. Restless Ryder](#)).

(Stage light up to show Ryder riding through a rain storm, thunder and lightning.)

ACT Two

Scene One

Lights up on a dimly lit saloon. The radio is on. There are two unidentified men at the bar. There is a couple at a table, Joe and The Temptress. The couple is having an argument.

Radio

Isolated incidents of vigilantism against illegal immigrants have been reported in parts of the state. One group that claims responsibility for some of the incidents released a statement that said the war on terrorism was being hampered by the inability of the Border Patrol and other law enforcement agencies. It went on to say it was the duty of all citizens to fight terrorism and the potential of terrorism.

(The radio sound fades as volume of the couple's argument increases.)

Joe

(Stands up and yells)

That's the last time you humiliate me. We're through!



The Temptress

(She stands up and faces Joe)

Fine! I'm tired of you anyway. Thinking you can change me into something I'm not. I can get any man I want. And I will do it any time I please. And if I want to mess with his head a

little, or a lot, I'll do that when I want, too. I'm in control, or nothing.

(The Temptress turns away and doesn't look at Joe again.)



(Joe makes a sound of disgust, walks over to the far side of the ROOM and stands there looking back at The Temptress.)

(The sound of a motorcycle is heard off stage. After a few seconds Ryder enters the saloon and stands at the bar, opposite side to where the other two men are sitting, his back to the audience. He orders a drink from the bartender. The Temptress has watched him



enter the saloon and walk to the bar. She then moves suggestively over to Ryder after he is served his drink. Joe sees this, makes another sound of disgust, and walks out of the bar. The Temptress puts her hand on Ryder's arm. He was lost in thought and is startled. He puts down his drink and faces her.)

The Temptress

Easy now. Don't get jumpy. I don't bite. At least not until we get to know each other better. What's your name?

Ryder

I'm not interested in getting to know you better. I've a lot to think about, so if you don't mind, I'll get back to my drink.

(He turns away from her.)

The Temptress



(Not giving up, rubbing his back.)

Now, come on. We all have a lot on our minds from time to time. But everyone needs a little relaxation, too.

(The music for [8. Stay](#), begins.)

Why don't you let me buy you a drink and help ease that load off your mind. You know that old saying, "a sorrow shared is half a sorrow, but a joy shared is twice a joy."

Ryder

(He turns back to face her. He takes a longer look at her. She takes one step away, does a graceful turn, and smiles back at him. He makes a move for the door. She catches his arm and sings, [8. Stay](#).)

(During the song verses The Temptress moves around Ryder. She has "trapped" him. During the song, after each "whistle" he pushes her away and moves, first to the table

where she and Joe were sitting, then back to the bar. At the end of the “crazy dance” Ryder pushes her away for the last time. The acoustic guitar instrumental that finishes the song is now heard.)

Ryder

No thanks. I told you. I’m not interested.

(He moves to the door and exits to outside the saloon.)

(The Temptress is astonished, but not defeated. She sees the other men at the bar and moves in their direction as the guitar instrumental continues and the lights darken.)



ACT Two

Scene Two

Lights up on the area where Ryder's motorcycle is parked. Joe is there admiring it.

(Ryder exits the saloon and walks over to his motorcycle. He fusses with the backpack that is strapped to the bike.)



Joe

Nice bike, man. How long you had it?

Ryder

(Ryder speaks without turning around)

Thanks. I've had it almost one year.

Joe

Where'd you get it, man?

Ryder

(After a pause, and without turning around.)

You ask a lot of questions.

Joe

No offense, man. Just curious.

(Joe changes the subject.)

Hey, how come you're not with that bitch?

(He motions back to the saloon)

Don't you like girls?

(Ryder turns around, stares hard at Joe, and then moves to get on the bike and leave.)

Hey, man. I asked you a question.

Ryder

(Ryder is annoyed and a little angry.)

What is your problem? Man!

Joe

I'm pissed off. That's my problem. I was with that bitch for two months. She trapped me

like a spider, man. Injected me with her
venom until I thought I was dead! Well, I
pushed her off me tonight. I ain't putting up
with her shit no more! I ain't putting up with
that kind of shit from any woman no more!

(Joe sings, [9. No More](#). Ryder joins in. They
trade off verses. The last verse they trade off
each line.)

Ryder

What's your name?

Joe

Joe

Ryder





My name's Ryder. See ya later, Joe.

(Ryder gets ready to start the bike. Joe comes up to him quickly and brandishes a knife, threatening him. Ryder freezes.)

Joe

There's another reason why I'm pissed off, man. You're on my bike. Now get off before I cut you up.

(Ryder gets off and backs away. Joe follows still threatening with the knife.)

I asked you a question, man. Where did you get that bike?

Ryder

An old man, up north, gave it to me. I was injured and robbed of everything I owned. He and an old woman took care of me. I didn't have any money, so when I was ready to

leave the old man gave me the bike so I could travel.

Joe

I don't believe you, man. My grandfather had that bike. My bike!

(He motions toward the motorcycle.)

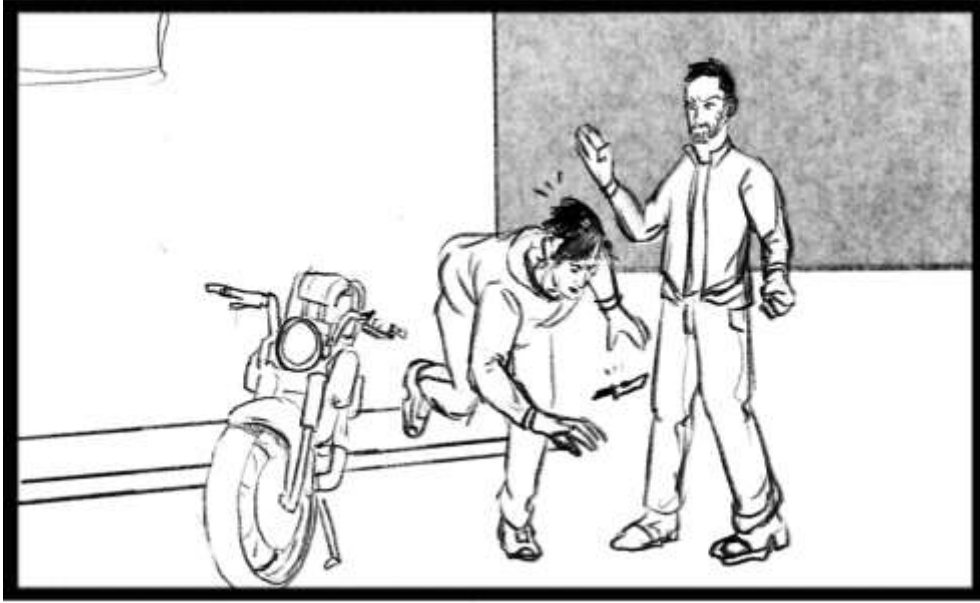
He wouldn't give away my bike to some stranger. What did you do, steal it from him?

Ryder

I didn't steal it. I didn't even want it, but I had to take it. He made me take it. It was a bad situation and I had to leave, fast.

Joe

(Getting louder and a little crazy sounding)



What do you mean a bad situation? You're words stink like lies!

Ryder

I told you. I had to leave. When the old man died the old woman started yelling for me to get out, so I did.

Joe

He died? You killed him?

(Joe lunges at Ryder with the knife. Ryder dodges and hits Joe on the back of the neck. Joe goes down hard and drops the knife.)

(Ryder picks the knife up and throws it far away. Joe stays on the ground and rolls to a sitting position and looks up at Ryder.)

You killed my grandfather, didn't you? You bastard!

Ryder

(Emphatically)

I didn't kill him. He and the old woman cared for me. They helped me get well.

(Ryder walks off a couple of steps, then turns to face Joe. Joe gets up from the ground.)

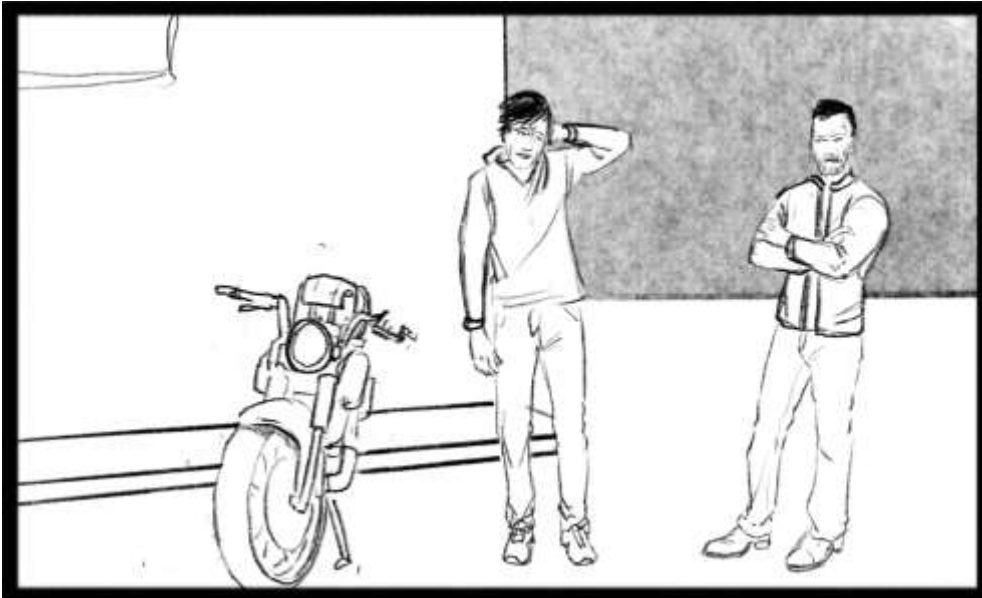
That old man has some sort of hold on me; even from the grave. I don't understand it, but now he speaks to me in my dreams. Before he appeared to me as a ghost, but now it is just in my dreams.

(Joe is extremely interested in what Ryder is saying.)

He tells me to travel north. That I have a debt to pay. That I have to help his people.

(In a mix of frustration and anxiety)

I'm half-crazy because of it. And now I meet you. What the hell is going on?



Joe

Listen, man. I didn't believe you before. But now I do. He speaks to me, too, my grandfather, in my dreams. I'm traveling north, back to my home town, Puebla.

(Ryder watches him. Joe pauses, then continues)

My parents were killed when I was very small. My grandparents raised me, but I got sick of living in that place. I was wild, and one day I saw a dead man lying in the hills. Now I know it was you, man. I thought you were dead, so I took your things. So what, what would a dead man care? When my grandfather found out he sent me away. He said he didn't want

a thief for a grandson; he wanted a new leader for the people. I left in your truck. My bike, (he points at the bike) that bike, wasn't running at the time. I don't have that truck anymore. I had to sell it for money.

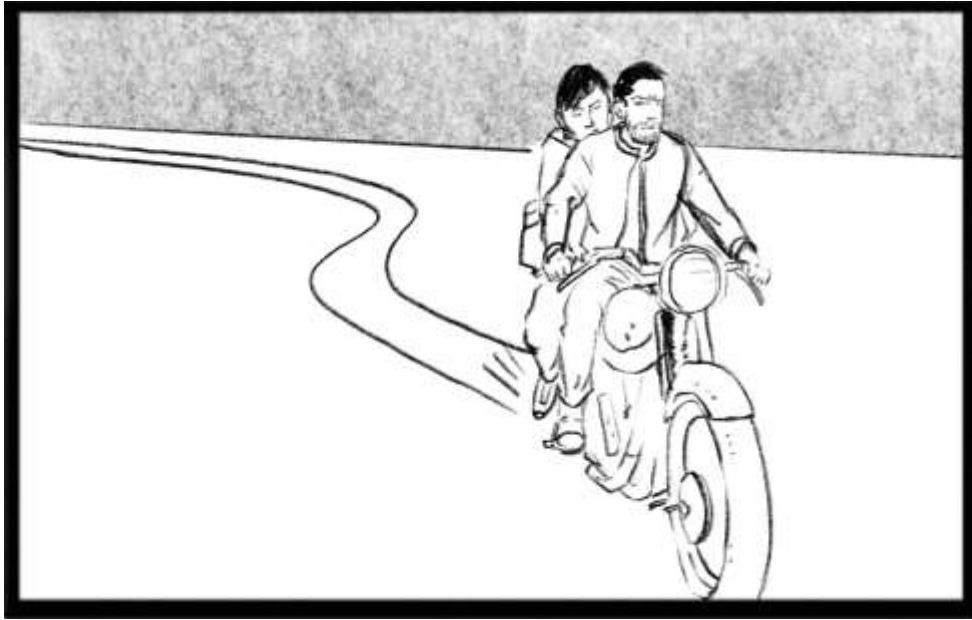
(He pauses.)

I was fighting it, but now I know I must go back. But there is more. I know, I can feel it, but I don't know what. Some kind of disaster. Some kind of hope. I don't know, man. You're right. It's making me crazy, too!

(A cold wind blows through the saloon parking lot. Both Joe and Ryder shiver and look around, then up, then at each other. Both say at the same time in a loud whisper . . .)

Joe and Ryder

Viejo!



(They both shudder and shake off the cold feeling.)

Ryder

Well, it seems Fate, or someone, has some purpose for our meeting. Alright, let's go, together, and find out what this is all about.

(Ryder gets on the bike. After a moment of thought, Joe gets on behind him. They leave.)

ACT Two

Scene Three

Setting is in an abandoned building. Perhaps an old, pre-interstate highway service station on a road rarely traveled anymore. There is the sound of rain. Ryder and Joe enter the building. They are wet. Ryder has his backpack and bedroll with him. Joe also has a backpack and sleeping bag.



Joe

I hate riding in the rain, man.

(He looks around.)

This place is a mess. I bet no one has been here for years.

Ryder

I just want to rest. We will reach New Hope tomorrow. I don't have any food left, so we'll have to wait until New Hope to eat.

(He finds a place to sit down.)

You said we can get to your home town of Puebla from New Hope, right?

Joe

That's right. Some of the people from Puebla work at New Hope on the ranches and farms. The two towns are not close, about 50 miles apart, but that whole area is pretty remote. New Hope is mostly Anglos, Puebla is mostly Mexicanos.

Now that we are getting closer I am thinking more about my family and friends. When I left, I left in a hurry.

(He is thoughtful.)

I think some people will not be so happy with me when I get back.

(Looking happier.)

I have a girlfriend, or had a girlfriend there. We were very close.

(Looking wistful.)

Maria. She is so beautiful.

Ryder

Any kids?

Joe

What? Kids? No, man. No kids. Maybe someday.

(Both men are silent. Ryder gets out a pen and some paper and starts to write.)

Hey, man. Who you writing to?

Ryder

Kate. I'm writing to Kate. When this is all over, whatever "this" is, I want to go back to her. I don't know if she will ever trust me again not to leave. But I still want to go back to her.

Joe

And I want to go back to Maria.

(Both men are silent, again.)

Hey, Ryder. Tell me something about yourself. Are you a drifter or something? You weren't living in New Hope, were you?

Ryder

(He sighs.)

Joe, believe me. There is nothing interesting I can tell you about myself. No, I wasn't really living in New Hope, just working to earn some cash and then move on. I guess I am a drifter. Or was. I don't want to go from place

to place any longer. I have nothing to show for my life, except a lot of unhappy people along the way, including me.

Joe

Oh, come on. If you were so unhappy, why did you drift?

Ryder

(Thoughtfully)

Well, I guess it was OK at first. Kind of exciting to be on the move. No responsibilities. When things got too crowded or stuffy – with people, I mean – I just moved on. It became a habit. Somewhere along the way it stopped being fun, but I kept on. Maybe I didn't know how to stop.

(Ryder is quiet.)

Joe

OK, so then what. I know that isn't all.

Ryder

It should be obvious, Joe. I am writing to a woman. I guess I didn't know how unhappy I was until I met Kate. When I am with her everything is different. Much better.

(Suddenly very disgusted.)

This whole business could not have happened at a worse time for us! She had accepted me into her home. Her son had just started to let me in to his world. Damn!

(He shuts up.)

Joe

Whoa there. Easy does it, man. Maybe you have to start over again with her. If you think she is worth it?

Ryder

She is worth it.

Joe

Good. OK, my turn. I told you my grandfather kicked me out of town. After I left I was lost. I wasn't happy with the circumstances of my leaving, but I thought leaving was just what I wanted. Man, I didn't want to live in Puebla. That nothing town. I wanted to live someplace exciting.

Well, I didn't do very well. I blew all my/your money

(Ryder gives him a stern look).

Then I had to work at anything I could get. One thing led to another and I ended up with that Temptress, that bitch! I swear, one of us would be dead now if I stayed much longer with her.

Ryder

Temptress is the right name for her. A combination of lust, power and an overwhelming need for control. Somewhere along the way she became emotionally bent. A sad story, I'm sure.

You know, everyone has a little of that in them. I don't mean being emotionally damaged, but that need for control. It's important to feel in control of your own life. To some that means controlling other people, too.

(Shaking his head.)

That's when it can start to get crazy and out of control

(Emphasizing the word "out.")

She was bad news, that's for sure.

Joe

(Joe nods "Yes.")

Man, I grew to hate her. And she didn't care, as long as there was some other man who would give her attention and she could manipulate.

Ryder, listen: I don't know if I want to stay in Puebla. I do know I need to have a better foundation, some direction, if I want to make a start somewhere else. But now I must go back. Something is there for me. Something very important. Now that my grandfather is dead, according to you, people may look to me for guidance. This is how it was always to be. Passed down from my grandfather, to my father, to me. Then again, my father is dead, and I left in shame. Maybe they will spit on me instead of welcome me. I guess I will see when I get there.

(Ryder nods in agreement. Lights darken.)



ACT Two

Scene Four

The town hall of the town of New Hope. It is late morning. There are a number of townspeople of different ages, but all have a rancher's, or farmer's appearance. They all are wearing some kind of rain gear and are wet. The sound of a storm – wind, thunder, and rain – can be heard above the general murmuring.

The Mayor of the town approaches a podium in the front of the hall. He is not an imposing man, being of medium height with a more intellectual bearing, relative to those others seated in the hall.

Mayor

Attention; May I please have your attention?
Everyone, please!

(General murmuring dies down. Everyone focus on the Mayor.)

Thank you. This emergency meeting of the town of New Hope will come to order.

(He raps his gavel.)

Now, we are here to organize our efforts in order to address the imminent problem of flooding. So far we have avoided the fate of other towns along the river, but the time is near for us, too.

(The general murmuring starts again and rises in volume.)

Please, everyone please! We have to face this problem head on. Because of the flooding disaster in the other towns along the river the State's emergency resources are stretched thin. We cannot expect much, if any help from them right away. Now I

propose we discuss what resources we do have and decide how best to use them.

Red

(A burly man of above average height sporting a red beard stands up)

Mayor, you know me. I have a working ranch just north of here. Part of it is right at river level.

(He turns and addresses everyone)

It's already flooded! It's too late for my place, but we should bring every kind of heavy equipment we have and put up dirt berms, like a levee, right at the river's edge.

(General murmuring is heard from the crowd about the prospect of building berms.)

Mayor

Red, thank you for your suggestion. Berms would just ruin the parks at the river, but maybe you're right. Tell me, why didn't you do something at your place?

Red

It's too much for me alone.

Mayor

You have about 10 men staying on your place, don't you? Where are they?



Red

(Angrily, again turning to the crowd)

They left!

(General intake of breath from the crowd)

That's right! They all left yesterday. They told me they are returning to Puebla. Damn them to hell! I might have saved my place if they had stayed.

Jeff

(A smaller, thinner man than Red stands up.)

My workers have left my place, too. Not a thought of how I provide for them by giving them work so they can send money to their families in Puebla. They are lucky I don't call the immigration authorities on the whole bunch.

(General shouts of agreement)

Mayor

Now let's not lose sight of why we are here.

Sam

(Another man about the same size as Red, but without a beard stands up.)

Mayor, I need to say something.

(The Mayor motions for him to continue)

I'm really mad about how this whole thing is turning out. By the time it's all over and done we won't have much of a town left. We can tear up our riverside park; build berms and such. It's going to ruin that part of the town. After the water subsides it's going to be a real mess. Who knows how long it will take to get back to normal. Now I've been following what's been happening at the State capitol. Since the Safe Borders Act has passed a lot of folks around the state feel we need to take

steps to secure our lands better than they are. Now I'm not saying those people in Puebla are a bad sort, but they are here illegally. Who knows what kind of folk are holed up there? All we know is that they show up here when they need money, and leave whenever the going gets rough!

(More general shouts of agreement)

They have been down there long enough. After we take care of our town and this flooding, I say we clear them out! There will always be more of them. Maybe the next lot will be more grateful and not run off at the first sign of trouble.

(Louder general shouts of agreement.)



Ryder

(Sitting in the back now jumps to his feet.)

Enough! I've heard enough of that bigoted, BS to last me the rest of my life! You people have no idea what you'll get yourselves into if you ever harm even one person in Puebla.

Red

Who the hell are you, stranger? I don't remember seeing you around here before.

Ryder

Sam knows who I am.

(Ryder turns toward Sam)

Don't you, Sam?

Sam

I recognize you now, Ryder. Where have you been this past year?

Ryder

I'm surprised you care now. I don't remember anyone looking for me then.

Sam

We looked some. We didn't find anything so we figured you just left. Who's that with you?

Joe

(Joe stands up)

I'm Joe. I used to live in Puebla. I have been away, but now I'm back.

Sam

Well, neither of you belong here, especially now. We have a crisis on our hands and we don't need you two confusing things.

(Murmurs of agreement and shouts of, "sit down," and "shut-up," are heard)



Joe

Just one minute!

(Joe addresses the room.)

You people are acting very ignorant. You depend on the people of Puebla, as they depend on you. Even though the two towns are not close to each other, each contributes to the other. Puebla provides the labor so your crops can be harvested, your livestock prepared and taken to market. You provide Puebla with the income many families depend on.

Red

Shut up, “wetback.”

Joe

(He is stunned by what was said. The crowd murmurs.)

Sir, I am not a “wetback.” That is a disgusting word. I am a citizen of this country. I was born here. My father was born here. Yes, my grandfather entered this country from Mexico to find work, as did my mother. But I am a citizen, as much as you are.

(He addresses the room again.)

Listen, everyone. I don’t know much about this Safe Borders Act, but I know it was not meant to allow what, it seems, some of you are thinking of doing. Puebla is not your enemy. The flood is your enemy. Those men from Puebla who work for you are protecting their homes. Just as you are here.

(Joe seems to realize something.)

Ryder, we must go to Puebla, now. If the flooding will happen here it will soon also happen in Puebla.

Ryder

You're right. Let's get going.

(Ryder begins to leave, followed by Joe.)

Joe

(The crowd is watching the two leave. Joe stops before he goes outside and addresses the room again.)

The people of Puebla will defend themselves, if necessary. They have that right.

(He leaves after Ryder.)

Mayor

(After Ryder and Joe have left, the Mayor speaks up.)

Sam! You're talking crazy. Crazy! You can't take the law into your own hands. Now no more of that kind of talk! Let's focus on the present and saving our town. Who can help

transport tractors from the farms so we can start on those berms?

(Crowd murmurs increase in volume again.)

(Lights down in the town hall, and up in the location where Ryder and Joe exited. The two of them are standing under the awning of the building. It is raining.)



Ryder

I was just thinking of Kate; wondering how she is doing with these storms.

Joe

Relax. You know these storms are mostly up here in the north. She is fine.

Ryder

Yeah, I guess you're right. Hey, what happened to your accent in there? I didn't hear one, "Man," out of you.

(Ryder exaggerates the word, “Man.”)

Joe

(Laughs)

I’m an educated person, Ryder. I got a BS in BS at the University of . . .(he fake sneezes loudly.)

Ryder

(Laughs)

OK, whatever. I’m not sure which “Joe” I like best.

(They both laugh)

One other thing. Last night, before we got here, I didn’t have any dreams. At least about the old man. First time in a long time.

Joe

Hey, hombre. Now that I think about it. I didn't either.

(Looking thoughtful, then brings himself back to the present)

Let's go. I'm anxious about Puebla.

(They leave walking through the rain.)

ACT Two

Scene Five



A river bank in a rain storm. Men and women are placing filled sand bags along the river bank. They are singing together as the work progresses. Ryder and Joe pull up on the motorcycle, dismount and go to talk to one of the men.

Joe

Manuel. Manuel Sanchez. It's me, Joe.

Manuel

(A man about the same age as Joe looks up from his work. Recognizing Joe he runs to him and embraces him.)

Joe, welcome back. You have come just in time. We need help. The river is rising. We are almost finished here, but then we need to work on another section of the river where

the land is lower. We are not sure we can finish before it floods. Even then we don't know if we will be safe.

Joe

We are here to help. This is Ryder. He brought me back to Puebla.

Manuel

(He looks at Ryder, then recognition flashes in his face)

Virgen de Guadalupe! You are the man I brought to Viejo many months ago.

(He sees the motorcycle again and recognizes it, too)

Joe, what's going on? Isn't that your motorcycle?

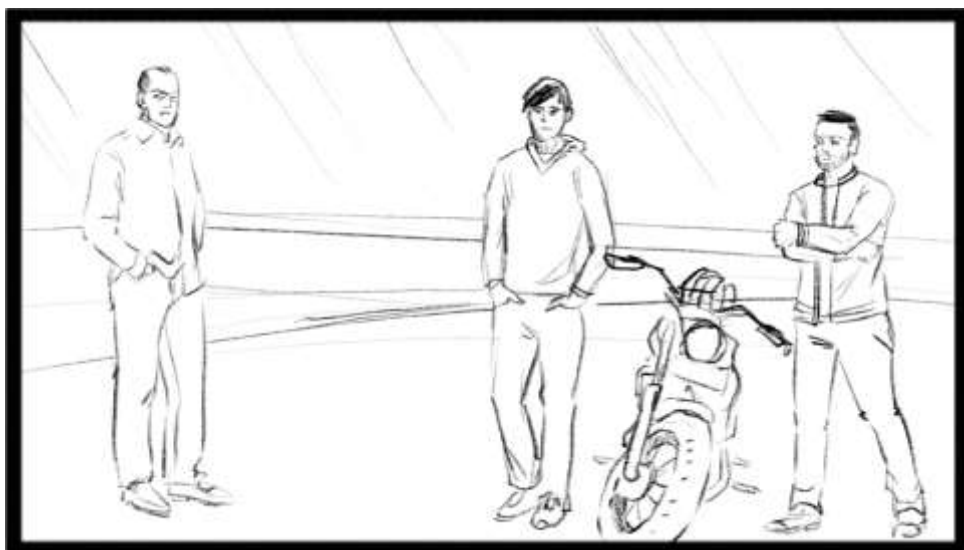
Joe

(Realizing Manuel's confusion.)

Manuel. Later for explanations. Now, let us save Puebla.

Miguel Vargas

(An older man looks up from his work, recognizes Joe and walks over frowning)



Jose! Why have you returned? Viejo banished you from Puebla. Have you come to disgrace us again? Go now before we force you to go.

Joe

(Seriously)

Senor Vargas, please let me stay. I have come to help. That is all. I have brought Ryder. He is the fallen man from whom I brought shame upon myself and my home. We are not enemies, but friends.

(Joe looks pleadingly at Ryder for confirmation. After hesitating, Ryder nods affirmatively.)

(The other people working have stopped to listen to look at Senor Vargas, Joe and Ryder. Senor Vargas looks hard at Ryder and Joe; Then nods.)

Miguel Vargas

Jose, you have much to answer for, but you are right. We need all the help we can get. Let us save Puebla!

(A cheer goes up from the people looking on. Miguel, Joe and Ryder are surprised, then pleased.)

(Joe sings, [10. Floodplain](#)) As the song ends the workers move off stage – going to the next section of river.)



ACT Two

Scene Six

Lights on showing a front room inside a modest home. A woman is working preparing a meal in an adjoining kitchen. A radio is on playing a newscast. She stops to listen.

Radio

. . . Flooding has affected many areas of the northern part of the State. The national weather service reports that the weather pattern that has produced the heavy rains is breaking up. The worst of the storms seems to be over. Communities all across the State can breathe a sigh of relief . . .

Senora Vargas

(She crosses herself and mutters a prayer) in Spanish - Thank you God, for sparing us.





(The front door opens. Miguel Vargas, Joe, and Ryder enter. They take off their coats and hang them on a coat rack near the door. They are all very tired. Miguel Vargas motions for the two of them to sit. The woman notices Joe and runs out to embrace him.)

Jose! Gracias virgencita por traermelo de regreso. Gracias. (she prays) I did not know what had happened to you. I am so glad to see you.

(Suddenly she backs away from Joe and puts her hand over her mouth. She looks at Miguel Vargas. Miguel Vargas shakes his head.)

Jose, what you did. How can you stay here? We are disgraced.

(She starts to cry.)

Joe

(Joe is upset as well.)

Senora Vargas, please don't cry. I know I brought disgrace to our town. I am here to make things right, if I can. I have thought a lot about what Viejo tried to teach me. He did teach me. I know my responsibility now.

(He pauses.)

Viejo has been speaking to me, in my dreams. He compelled me to return. To help save Puebla.

Senora Vargas

(Astonished.)

Jose, what do you mean he spoke to you in your dreams? Are we supposed to believe that?

Joe

(Pained expression, then determined.)

Senora, I know it may be too much to believe. But that is what happened. We are here now, Ryder and I, because of the ghost of Viejo. Ryder is the man I robbed. Viejo spoke to us both and brought us together. We settled our differences. We came to Puebla together.

(He turns to Miguel Vargas.)

And we worked together to hold back the river, didn't we Senor Vargas?



(Miguel Vargas nods.)

Senora Vargas

Virgen de Guadalupe!, Jose! This is too much. You say you have settled your differences. But not with Puebla.

(Joe looks crestfallen.)

(Senora Vargas walks across the room, and turns.)

I heard on the radio that the storms are almost over. God has spared us.

(All looked relieved.)

(Turning to Joe.)

Jose, Viejo was a man of the old ways. He was not a Christian. But it was God's wish that you return to Puebla and help us. And now you must make your peace with him if

you want to become part of our community again.

Joe

Yes, Senora, but first you must meet Ryder.

(Joe motions to Ryder. He nods to Senora Vargas.)

Ryder

Nice to meet you. Thanks for allowing me to rest in your home.

Senora Vargas

You are welcome. Mi casa es tu casa. I can see you have been working to save Puebla, too. Thank you very much for helping us.

Ryder

Like Joe said, Viejo spoke to me, as well. I had to come here. I met Joe along the way

and we agreed to come here together. I am happy I could help.

Joe

Senora, I know it will take some time to explain all of this. But now I need to ask you something very important. Is Maria here? I mean, does she still live here?

Senora Vargas

(Again looking at Miguel Vargas, who is motionless.)

No, Jose. My daughter does not live here anymore.

Joe

(He is visibly shaken.)

I see.

Senora Vargas

She does not live here. She has her own casa. The small house just down the street.

(Joe brightens visibly.)

She will be coming over soon to help with some food for the people who have been working so hard to hold back the river.

Joe

Maria, here, soon?

(Joe is flustered.)

Miguel Vargas

(Angrily getting up from his seat.)

Jose! You left her! She was crushed!

(Shaking his fist.)

You will answer for what you have done to her!

Senora Vargas

Miguel, he does not know? You did not tell him?

Miguel Vargas

No, I did not tell him. I am ashamed I could not protect her from him.

(Pointing his finger at Joe.)

You have damaged her forever!

Joe

(Looking frightened.)

What has happened to Maria?

(At that moment there is a knock on the door, then the door opens. Everyone in the room turns to look towards the door. A woman covered in a raincoat enters the house. She is carrying a bundle in her arms.)

Maria



Mama! I'm here to help you now. The little one held me up a bit. But he's sleeping now.

(Maria sees Ryder and stops. She sees her father and Joe.)

Jose?

Joe

(He breathes the word.)

Maria.

Maria

Jose, what are you doing here?

(She looks like she is going to cry. She begins to turn back toward the door, as if to leave. Joe catches her before he can.)

Joe

Maria, please don't go. I have returned to Puebla, to you.

Maria

(She turns back to him.)

Why did you leave me? It nearly killed me!

(She starts to silently cry.)

Joe

I had to leave. Viejo sent me away. I have returned now because I understand my place is here. Because you are my people.

(He motions to everyone in the room.)

And my people need me.



Maria

Yes, we do need you. And now there is one more who needs you.

(She unwraps the bundle she is carrying to reveal a sleeping baby.)

Joe

(He is amazed to see the baby)

Maria, he is yours?

Maria

(Solemnly)

Yes, Jose. He is mine, and yours.

Joe

(Mixed emotions – confusion, realization, denial, acceptance - cross Joes face as he looks at Maria and the baby)

Oh, Maria. Can I hold him?



Miguel Vargas

(Jumping up from his seat)

No! You cannot hold him! You cannot be trusted. You are not the kind of father my grandson needs. You are not the kind of person Puebla needs. Viejo was right to banish you. It was fortunate for us you came to help with Ryder. But that is over now.

(Miguel Vargas makes a threatening move toward Joe. Joe moves back a step.)

You should go!

Maria

(Maria places herself between Joe and Miguel Vargas.)

Papa! No!

(The baby starts to cry a little. Miguel Vargas hesitates at the sound of the baby.)

Ryder

(Ryder stands up)

Senor Vargas, please hear me. I'm a stranger here, but I know something about the town of New Hope you should hear. This is important to Puebla. Joe and I were there at a town meeting before we came to Puebla. Some of the people of New Hope are not friends of Puebla.

Miguel Vargas

That is true. Puebla has always provided the farmers and ranchers of New Hope with men who work. The men work hard, but, some of those farmers and ranchers think we are not good people. Once they tried to make us leave. They are very stupid, I think. Who would tend their fields and herds?

Ryder

They may try again to make you leave. That is what Joe and I heard at the meeting.

Miguel Vargas

(Angrily)

They will not! We have our children and grandchildren here. We will resist them. They will be sorry they ever thought to harm us.

Ryder

They could still make it hard for you. Joe can help you.

Miguel Vargas

Jose? How can he help?

Ryder

He has already helped. He spoke to the people at the town meeting and told them

that Puebla and New Hope need each other. I think at least some of the people listened to him. You need Joe to keep talking to the people of New Hope, so they will keep listening to Puebla.

Joe

Now Ryder, just a minute. Being part of Puebla again is one thing. Having to face that mob in New Hope is another. I'm not sure I want to do that.

Ryder

(Turning to Joe)

Joe, this is your time. It is something only you can do. This is what Viejo meant for you. Puebla needs you. You are a citizen of this country, and you are of Puebla.

(Emphasize, "*and.*")

Miguel Vargas

(Convinced)

Ryder, you are right. Puebla needs some influence. It has always been that way. Jose has a big mouth that can get him into trouble. It can also sooth hard feelings. I think he can try it. And it is how he can gain back our respect.

(To Joe)

Do you deny this is your duty? To Puebla and your son? Will you continue to be the shamed person, or work to gain our respect again and be part of Puebla?

Joe

(He is speechless. He looks at all of them and finally his eyes rest on Maria and her baby.)

How can I say “No?”

(He looks back to Miguel Vargas.)

Yes, Senor Vargas. I will do it. I will find some way to make peace with New Hope. They do need us, as we need them.

(Miguel Vargas nods approval)

Now, Maria, can I hold my son?

Maria

(Carefully she hands him to Joe who holds the baby closely.)

His name is Jesus.

(Everyone looks at Joe holding the baby.)

Joe

(He holds the baby away from himself, and above himself, so he can see him better)

Jesus! He will be a leader of our people.





(Several more villagers come into the house. Joe lowers the baby and continues to hold him. All sing, [11. Our Father.](#))



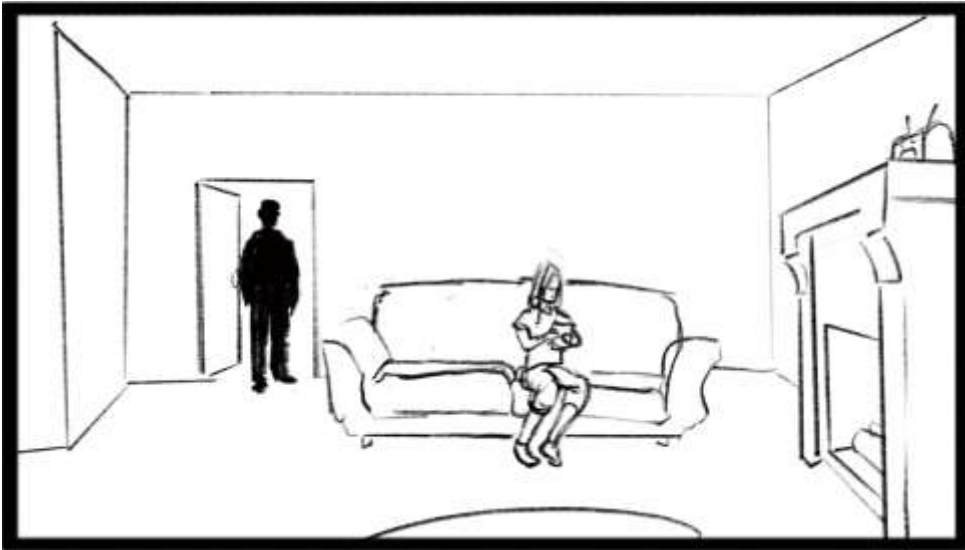
ACT Two

Scene Seven

The living room in Kate's house. Kate is sitting on the living room couch. It is evening and there is a fire in the fireplace. She is reading a letter. After she finishes the letter she looks into the fire. There is a knock on the door. She calls from the couch.)

Kate

Come in!



(Ryder enters the room and stops just inside the door)

Ryder

Kate. Can I come in?

Kate

I've read your letters. I don't know if I can believe it all. If I can believe you, anymore. You said you were happy here, then you left.

Ryder

I know, Kate.



Little Mike

(Little Mike comes in from the kitchen. He sees Ryder. He runs to him.)

Ryder!

(They embrace.)

Ryder

Little Mike, I missed you so much!

(After a few seconds Ryder extracts himself from Little Mike's embrace)

Hey, listen. I am very sorry I left you, and your Mom. That wasn't a good thing for me to do. I want you to know I left because I had an important job to do; Back where I used to live, before I met you and your Mom.

Little Mike

What was it?

Ryder

Do you hear about the big storms up north?

Little Mike

Yea, some of the kids at school had family up there. Mom says they had a real bad time.

Ryder

That's right. A real bad time. Well, I helped some of those people. And I made a new friend.

Little Mike

(He smiles a big smile)

That's great!

(He gets more serious.)

Ryder?

Ryder

Yes?

Little Mike

Do you have any more jobs like that?

Ryder

(He looks at Kate, then back at Little Mike.)

No, Mike. I don't have any more jobs like that.

Little Mike

(He smiles again.)

Great!

(Ryder and Kate share a happy glance and both look back at Little Mike. Ryder then remembers something.)

Ryder

Mike, when is your next Cub Scout meeting?
Can I go with you?

Little Mike

Tonight. Sure you can go. Oh, I have to get ready.

(He runs out of the room through the kitchen.)

Ryder

Can I go with him, Kate?

Kate

(She gets up from the couch and comes over to Ryder, puts her arms around him, and kisses him.)

Of course you can go.



(Music starts - Kate sings, [12. Since My Baby's Come Home](#). Ryder and Kate waltz between verses and until the end of the song. When the song is over she takes his hands and looks into his eyes.)

I love you Ryder.

Ryder

I love you.

The End