

EL CACHORRERO
Screenplay

FADE IN:

EXT. LA RINCONADA, PERU – NIGHT

Black mountains beneath a blacker sky.

At more than sixteen thousand feet, the settlement clings to the Andes – corrugated metal, mud, ice, scattered lights.

Wind SCREAMS through the darkness.

Far above the settlement –

A GOLD MINE.

Several POLICE VEHICLES sit dark on the road below it.

No sirens.

No flashing lights.

Men move uphill on foot.

Armed.

Breathing hard in the thin air.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE – CONTINUOUS

Two armed men stand outside the entrance.

One smokes.

The other watches the road.

A faint movement in the darkness.

Too late.

GUNFIRE.

The smoker drops.

The second man fires wildly toward the darkness.

Police return fire.

Men scatter.

Rounds strike rock.

Sparks.

Shouting in Spanish.

One officer reaches the entrance.

Another covers him.

They disappear underground.

INT. GOLD MINE – CONTINUOUS

Headlamps cut through dust.

Police move quickly through the narrow workings.

Distant shouting.

A burst of gunfire deeper inside.

Then –

MINERS.

Several of them.

Dirty. Exhausted. Terrified.

Some with their hands restrained.

An officer cuts one loose.

Another miner points deeper into the mine.

More armed men.

More shouting.
The officers push forward.
GUNFIRE ERUPTS.
The sound is deafening underground.
Rock dust rains from overhead.
One of the rescued miners ducks against the wall.
The firefight continues somewhere beyond him.
We stay on his face.
Terrified.
Another violent burst.
CUT TO BLACK.

EL CACHORRERO

Silence.
Then —
The sound of paper sliding across a table.

INT. MATEO'S HOUSE — KITCHEN — MORNING

A stack of bills.
PAST DUE.
Another.
FINAL NOTICE.
Another.
Mateo sits at the kitchen table.
Late forties. Hispanic. Strong hands. Working man's hands.
The kind that look wrong holding envelopes instead of tools.
A calculator sits beside him.
He punches in numbers.
Stops.
Starts again.
Same answer.
Not enough.
His WIFE moves quietly around the kitchen.
She already knows.
Mateo looks at his phone.
No calls.
No messages that matter.
He sets it facedown.
Another bill.
Another number.
Another subtraction.
His wife puts coffee beside him.
Mateo doesn't touch it.

EXT. MATEO'S HOUSE — DRIVEWAY — DAY

A GARAGE SALE.
Except this doesn't look like somebody clearing clutter.

It looks like somebody liquidating a life.
 Power tools.
 Hand tools.
 A welder.
 Mining and work equipment.
 Old household items.
 Boxes.
 Things accumulated over decades now marked with masking
 tape and handwritten prices.
 Mateo negotiates with a CUSTOMER.
 The customer hands him cash and walks away with one of
 Mateo's tools.
 Mateo watches it go.
 Another CUSTOMER looks beyond the tables.
 Toward Mateo's old WORK TRUCK.
 Unlike nearly everything surrounding it –
 no price tag.

CUSTOMER

Truck for sale?

Mateo doesn't even look up.

MATEO

No.

Immediate.

Firm.

Not even considering it.

The customer moves on.

A vehicle pulls up.

RAFAEL gets out.

Younger than Mateo.

Same blood.

Completely different energy.

Rafael looks over the driveway.

Then at his brother.

RAFAEL

Damn.

Mateo barely acknowledges him.

Rafael starts walking through the sale.

Something doesn't sit right.

He picks up one item.

Looks at the price.

Then another.

His expression changes.

These aren't things Mateo normally sells.

Then Rafael sees it.

An old MINING HELMET.

Their father's.

A price sticker on it.
 Rafael picks it up.

RAFAEL
 You're selling Pops' helmet?
 Mateo keeps working.

MATEO
 I'm selling whatever people'll buy.
 Rafael removes the sticker.

MATEO
 Rafa—
 RAFAEL
 No.
 He looks at the helmet.
 Then at his brother.

RAFAEL
 What's going on?
 MATEO
 Nothing.
 Rafael looks around the driveway.

RAFAEL
 This ain't nothing.
 Mateo sees another customer approaching.

MATEO
 Rafa, I've got people out here and a
 driveway full of shit I need to sell.
 RAFAEL
 Yeah. That's kinda what I'm asking
 about.

The front door opens.
 Mateo's KIDS come outside.
 The second they see Rafael —

KIDS
 Uncle Ralph!
 Rafael's entire demeanor changes.

RAFAEL
 Hey! Look at you two.
 They rush him.
 Rafael crouches and hugs them.
 Mateo watches.
 He loves seeing it.
 He just doesn't have time for it.

MATEO

All right, all right. Say hi and
bye, kiddos.

KID

Uncle Ralph just got here.

MATEO

And Uncle Ralph's got places to be.
Rafael looks up.

RAFAEL

I do?

MATEO

Peruvian vacation, remember?
The kids react.

KID

You're going to Peru?

RAFAEL

Looks that way.

MATEO

All right. Inside.
The kids protest.

MATEO

Come on. Dad's trying to sell this
stuff.
They hug Rafael again.

KIDS

Bye, Uncle Ralph.

RAFAEL

Later, troublemakers.
They disappear inside.
Mateo's wife steps out.
She sees Rafael.

WIFE

Rafa?

RAFAEL

Hey.
They embrace.
She looks from Rafael to Mateo.
She knows exactly what Rafael has noticed.

WIFE

You staying?

RAFAEL

Just passing through.

She nods.

Looks at Mateo.

Then heads back inside.

Rafael watches her go.

Turns back to his brother.

No jokes now.

RAFAEL

How bad?

Mateo says nothing.

That's the answer.

RAFAEL

You laid off?

MATEO

Yeah.

RAFAEL

How long?

MATEO

Long enough.

Rafael looks over everything again.

RAFAEL

You could've called me.

MATEO

For what?

RAFAEL

I don't know. Talk.

MATEO

Talking doesn't pay the mortgage.

Rafael considers that.

Then —

RAFAEL

Funny you should say that.

Mateo looks at him.

RAFAEL

I'm heading to Peru.

MATEO

You mentioned.

RAFAEL

La Rinconada.

Nothing from Mateo.

RAFAEL

Gold country.
That gets slightly more attention.

RAFAEL

I got some stuff going on down there.
Mateo gives him a look.

MATEO

Of course you do.

RAFAEL

I'm serious.

MATEO

That's what worries me.
Rafael smiles.

RAFAEL

I could probably use your help.

MATEO

Doing what?

RAFAEL

Mining.
Mateo finally looks at him.

MATEO

You don't know shit about mining.

RAFAEL

Exactly.
A beat.

RAFAEL

You do.
Rafael looks around the driveway.

RAFAEL

Might put you back on the map.
Mateo isn't buying it.
Not yet.

INT. MATEO'S HOUSE — KITCHEN — NIGHT

The garage sale is over.
A few unsold boxes sit near the back door.
Mateo sits at the kitchen table.
The bills are still there.
Beside them —
an envelope stuffed with cash.
He empties it.
Crumbled twenties.

Tens.
Fives.
A day's worth of strangers picking through his life.
Mateo counts it.
Stops.
Counts again.
Not enough.
His wife enters.

WIFE
How'd we do?

MATEO
Eight forty.
She looks at the money.

WIFE
That's something.

MATEO
That's nothing.

WIFE
Mateo—

MATEO
Welder alone cost me twelve hundred.
He pushes back.

MATEO
Sold it for three.
His wife sits across from him.
Mateo picks up one of the notices.

MATEO
We do this again next weekend, maybe
I get another thousand.
He looks around the house.

MATEO
Then what?
She doesn't answer.

MATEO
Start selling furniture?
He tosses the notice down.

MATEO
TV?
A beat.

MATEO
House is still behind.
His wife looks toward the hallway.

Makes sure the kids aren't listening.

WIFE

What did Rafa want?

Mateo gives a humorless laugh.

MATEO

To take me gold mining in Peru.

She waits for the punchline.

There isn't one.

WIFE

What?

MATEO

Some place in the Andes.

WIFE

Rafa's a miner now?

MATEO

No.

WIFE

That's comforting.

Mateo almost smiles.

Almost.

MATEO

Says he's got people down there.

Says they need somebody who knows underground.

WIFE

And that's supposed to be you.

MATEO

Apparently.

WIFE

What's the catch?

MATEO

You work without a paycheck.

WIFE

There's the catch.

MATEO

Then you get a window where whatever you pull is yours.

WIFE

Whatever you pull?

Ore. MATEO

Gold? WIFE

If you're lucky. MATEO

She leans back.

So you work for free and hope there's gold in the rock. WIFE

Pretty much. MATEO

That's gambling. WIFE

Mateo looks at her.

That's what I said. MATEO

Silence. She looks at the money.

You're thinking about it. WIFE

No. MATEO

Too quick. She knows him.

Mateo. WIFE

I'm not flying halfway around the world because Rafa showed up with another one of his schemes. MATEO

Okay. WIFE

I've got applications out. MATEO

I know. WIFE

Something'll come through. MATEO

Okay. WIFE

Mateo looks at her.

MATEO

Stop saying okay like that.

WIFE

How am I saying it?

MATEO

Like you don't believe me.

She reaches across the table.

Takes his hand.

WIFE

I believe you.

A beat.

WIFE

I don't believe the bank cares.

That lands.

Mateo looks down.

His wife leaves him at the table.

His eyes drift across the room.

Pops' old MINING HELMET.

No price sticker.

Mateo stares at it.

INT. MATEO'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

His wife sleeps.

Mateo doesn't.

Finally –

he reaches for his phone.

Searches:

LA RINCONADA PERU

Images.

An enormous settlement pressed against the Andes.

Snow.

Mud.

Corrugated metal roofs.

Miners disappearing into openings in the mountain.

Mateo scrolls.

The altitude catches his attention.

More than sixteen thousand feet.

Extreme cold.

Thin air.

Primitive infrastructure.

None of it looks inviting.

But the mining does.

Mateo searches:

LA RINCONADA MINER EARNINGS

Results.

Articles.

Videos.

Stories of miners working for weeks with little or no conventional pay.

Some come away with almost nothing.

Others get lucky.

Very lucky.

Mateo scrolls through photographs of ore.

Gold on scales.

Miners carrying sacks.

He stops on one story.

Reads.

His eyes settle on a number.

Mateo does the math.

Looks toward his sleeping wife.

Back to the phone.

Another result.

Another number.

This isn't a job.

Rafa was right.

It's a gamble.

But it's a gamble involving the one thing Mateo knows how to do.

He locks the phone.

Darkness.

A moment later —

WIFE

How much?

Mateo turns.

Her eyes are still closed.

MATEO

Thought you were asleep.

WIFE

How much can they make?

Mateo doesn't answer immediately.

MATEO

Depends.

Her eyes open.

WIFE

That's not a number.

MATEO

Because there isn't one.

WIFE

Meaning?

MATEO

Some guys come out with nothing.

A beat.

WIFE

And the others?

Mateo looks at the phone.

MATEO

Enough.

She studies him.

WIFE

You're thinking about going.

MATEO

I'm thinking.

WIFE

With what money?

That lands harder.

WIFE

Mateo, we just sold half the garage
because we need money.

He says nothing.

WIFE

And now you're talking about
spending it on airfare?

MATEO

I'm not talking about anything.

WIFE

You're lying in bed at two in the
morning looking up how much gold
miners make in Peru.

Mateo looks away.

WIFE

That's talking about it.

Silence.

WIFE

What happens if you don't find
anything?

Mateo has no answer.

WIFE

You come home and we're exactly

where we are now—
A beat.

WIFE
—minus the little money we had left.
Mateo looks at the ceiling.

MATEO
What happens if I do?
Neither has an answer.

INT. MATEO'S HOUSE — KITCHEN — PRE-DAWN
Dark.
The \$840 sits on the table.
Beside it —
bills.
Mortgage notice.
Mateo looks from one to the other.
It isn't enough to save them.
It might be enough to take the gamble.
Mateo picks up his phone.
RAFA.
He calls.
Ringing.
Once.
Twice.

RAFA (V.O.)
Somebody better be dead.

MATEO
What time's your flight?
Silence.
Rafa is awake now.

RAFA (V.O.)
Why?

MATEO
What time, Rafa?

RAFA (V.O.)
Two forty.
Mateo looks toward the hallway where his family sleeps.

MATEO
Don't leave without me.
Silence.

RAFA (V.O.)
You sure?
Mateo looks at Pops' helmet.

MATEO

No.

A beat.

MATEO

That's why you better not give me
time to change my mind.

INT. MATEO'S HOUSE – KITCHEN – MORNING

Mateo's wife pours coffee.

Mateo enters.

She looks at him.

WIFE

You didn't sleep.

MATEO

No.

WIFE

Neither did I.

Mateo sits.

MATEO

I called Rafa.

She stops.

WIFE

When?

MATEO

This morning.

She turns.

WIFE

You already called him.

MATEO

Yeah.

WIFE

You made the decision.

MATEO

I told him not to leave without me.

WIFE

That's a decision.

MATEO

I know.

She stares at him.

WIFE

Then why are we talking?

MATEO

Because I'm not leaving without
talking to you.

WIFE

But you're leaving.
Mateo doesn't answer.

WIFE

Jesus Christ, Mateo.

MATEO

What do you want me to do?

WIFE

Not take what little money we have
left and gamble it on gold in Peru.

MATEO

I've applied everywhere that'll take
an application.
He gestures toward the garage.

MATEO

Yesterday I sold twenty years of
tools for eight hundred and forty
dollars.
He looks at the bills.

MATEO

And it didn't fix a fucking thing.
His wife looks away.

MATEO

If I stay here, maybe somebody
calls. Maybe somebody doesn't. Maybe
we make next month's payment. Maybe
we don't.

WIFE

And this is better?

MATEO

No.
That surprises her.

MATEO

It's a chance.

WIFE

It's gambling.

MATEO

Right now everything's gambling.

She looks at him.

WIFE

And if you come back with nothing?
Mateo answers immediately.
He's already thought about it.

MATEO

Then we sell the truck.
She stares at him.

WIFE

The truck?

MATEO

If we have to.

WIFE

You said we weren't selling it.

MATEO

We're not.

WIFE

You just said—

MATEO

If I come back empty-handed, it's gone.
She studies him.
Realizes he's already worked through every version of this.

WIFE

You've thought all this through.

MATEO

I had to.

WIFE

You always have to have another way out.
Mateo looks at her.

MATEO

Yeah.
She shakes her head.

WIFE

Even when nobody's trapped yet.
Mateo doesn't respond.

INT. MATEO'S HOUSE — BEDROOM — LATER
An open duffel.
Work clothes.
Heavy socks.

Gloves.
Mateo packs.
His wife appears in the doorway.
She watches him.
Eventually she helps.
Not because she likes this.
Because he's her husband.

INT. MATEO'S HOUSE — LIVING ROOM — LATER
The kids stand near Mateo's bag.

KID
How long are you going?

MATEO
Not long.

KID
Where?

MATEO
Peru.
The kid's eyes widen.

KID
With Uncle Ralph?

MATEO
Yeah.

KID
Are you gonna find gold?
Mateo looks toward his wife.

MATEO
That's the plan.

KID
Bring some home.
Mateo kneels.
Pulls both kids close.

MATEO
That's the plan too.
He holds them longer than they expect.

EXT. MATEO'S HOUSE — DAY
Rafa's vehicle pulls into the driveway.
Mateo's bag waits.
Rafa gets out.
The kids run toward him.

KIDS
Uncle Ralph!

RAFA

There they are.
He hugs them.

KID

Bring Dad back with gold.
Rafa glances at Mateo.

RAFA

That's the job.
Mateo loads his bag.
His wife hugs him.
Hard.
Eventually she lets go.
Mateo gets into the vehicle.
Rafa heads toward the driver's side.

WIFE

Rafa.
He stops.
She approaches.
Quietly.

WIFE

You brought this to my door.
Rafa's smile disappears.

WIFE

You bring him back through it.
Rafa looks toward Mateo.
Then back at her.

RAFA

I will.
She studies him.
He understands.
Rafa gets behind the wheel.
The vehicle backs away.
The kids wave.
Mateo watches through the window.
His wife stands behind them.
Mateo keeps watching until his home disappears from view.

INT. RAFA'S VEHICLE — MOVING — DAY

Silence.
Rafa drives.
Mateo looks ahead.

RAFA

Still time to turn around.
Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

Drive.
Rafa does.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE — NIGHT
Cabin lights dim.
Most passengers sleep.
Mateo sits by the window.
Rafa beside him, eyes closed.
Mateo isn't sleeping.

MATEO

Rafa.
Nothing.

MATEO

Rafa.

RAFA

If this plane ain't falling, I'm
asleep.

MATEO

You made sure they're gonna have
everything on that list I gave you?
Rafa opens one eye.

RAFA

What list?
Mateo slowly turns toward him.
Rafa grins.

RAFA

I'm fucking with you.
He digs into his jacket.
Pulls out Mateo's carefully folded equipment list.
Except now it's crumpled to hell.
Mateo stares at it.

MATEO

Jesus Christ.
Rafa stuffs it back into his pocket.

RAFA

Relax. I got it.

MATEO

You didn't answer me.

RAFA

Yes. They'll have what you need.

MATEO

Everything?

RAFA

Everything that matters.

Mateo doesn't like that wording.

MATEO

That's not what the list says.

RAFA

Mateo—

MATEO

I put it on paper so we wouldn't
have this conversation at thirty
thousand feet.

Rafa sighs.

Pulls the list back out.

RAFA

I'm already on top of it. I've been
talking to my main guy down there.
Abram.

MATEO

Abram.

RAFA

Abram.

MATEO

Who's Abram?

RAFA

Knows the mountain. Knows the mines.
Been doing this shit forever.

Rafa taps the crumpled list.

RAFA

He's gonna be coming along with us.
Got a little crew out there for us.

MATEO

And he has all this?

Rafa looks at the list.

Then at Mateo.

RAFA

Yeah.

He crumples it tighter and stuffs it into his pocket.

RAFA

We got that.

Mateo watches the paper disappear.

MATEO

You lose that list, I'm throwing you
out of the plane.

Rafa closes his eyes.

RAFA

See? You're already feeling better.

Mateo looks out the window.

Blackness below.

MATEO

I was feeling better before you
showed up in my driveway.

RAFA

Bullshit.

A beat.

RAFA

You were selling Dad's helmet.

That shuts Mateo up.

Rafa doesn't open his eyes.

RAFA

Get some sleep, brother.

Mateo looks at him.

Then back through the window.

He doesn't sleep.

INT. COMMERCIAL AIRLINER — DAY

A hard THUMP.

The landing gear hits pavement.

Mateo wakes with a start.

Outside his window, the runway cuts through a vast, high-
altitude plain beneath an enormous Andean sky.

The engines REVERSE.

Mateo blinks himself awake.

Beside him, Rafa is already looking out the window.

MATEO

Where are we?

RAFA

Juliaca.

Mateo looks outside.

MATEO

This ain't La Rinconada.

RAFA

Nope.

MATEO
How much farther?
Rafa thinks about it.

RAFA
Few hours.
Mateo turns to him.

MATEO
Few?

RAFA
Depends.

MATEO
On what?

RAFA
Mountain.
Mateo stares at him.

MATEO
The fuck does that mean?

RAFA
That's what Abram told me.
The seatbelt sign DINGS.
Passengers immediately begin standing.
Rafa reaches overhead for his bag.

RAFA
Ask him yourself.

CUT TO:

EXT. INCA MANCO CÁPAC INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT — JULIACA — DAY
The terminal doors open.
Mateo and Rafa step outside with their bags.
Mateo stops.
Not dramatically.
Just—
something isn't right.
He takes another breath.
Deeper this time.
Still not enough.
Rafa keeps walking several steps before realizing Mateo
isn't beside him.
He turns.

RAFA
You good?

MATEO

Yeah.
Mateo catches up.

MATEO

Air's thin.

RAFA

We're twelve-five.

MATEO

Twelve-five?

RAFA

About twelve thousand five hundred feet.

Mateo looks toward the distant mountains.

MATEO

And we're going higher.

RAFA

About four thousand more.

Mateo looks at him.

RAFA

Give or take.

MATEO

You could've mentioned that.

RAFA

I said it was high.

MATEO

You said "high." Denver's high.

RAFA

This ain't Denver.

MATEO

No shit.

Rafa grins.
They continue through the pickup area.
People reunite with family.
Drivers hold signs.
Taxis maneuver through traffic.
Mateo scans the crowd.

MATEO

Who's looking for us?

RAFA

We're looking for him.

Rafa spots someone.

His expression changes.
A genuine smile.

RAFA

There he is.
Standing beside an aging, dust-covered 4X4 is ABRAM, late
fifties to early sixties.
Weathered face.
Work clothes.
No performance to him.
He simply looks like a man who has spent most of his life
working somewhere unforgiving.
Rafa approaches.

RAFA

Abram.

ABRAM

Rafael.
They embrace like men who haven't seen each other in a
while but don't need to make a production of it.
Abram steps back.
Looks past Rafa.
At Mateo.
Rafa gestures between them.

RAFA

My brother. Mateo.
Mateo extends his hand.

MATEO

Good to meet you.
Abram takes it.

ABRAM

Likewise.
A firm handshake.
Nothing competitive about it.
But each man notices the other's hands.
Calluses.
Scars.
Old damage.
Evidence.

ABRAM

Rafael tells me you've been
underground a long time.

MATEO

Twenty-seven years.
Abram nods.

ABRAM

Then I'm glad you're here.
That catches Mateo slightly off guard.
He'd expected to have to prove himself before receiving
that kind of respect.

MATEO

Appreciate that.
Abram takes one of the bags.

MATEO

He send you the equipment list?
Abram stops.
Looks at Mateo.
Then Rafa.

ABRAM

What equipment list?
Silence.
Mateo slowly turns his head toward his brother.
Rafa doesn't miss a beat.

RAFA

We got everything.
Mateo keeps staring at him.

MATEO

You said you sent it.

RAFA

I said I handled it.

MATEO

You pulled the fucking thing out of
your pocket.

RAFA

And look how well I preserved it.
Abram looks between them.
Already entertained.
Mateo points at Rafa.

MATEO

This motherfucker.

RAFA

Relax. Tell him what you need.

MATEO

That's why I made a list.

RAFA

And luckily—
Rafa reaches into his jacket.

Pulls out the battered, crumpled sheet.

RAFA

—we have a list.

Mateo snatches it from him.

Abram laughs.

ABRAM

Come on.

He lowers the tailgate of the 4x4.

ABRAM

Let's see what your brother forgot
to tell me.

Mateo lays the crumpled list across the tailgate.

Smooths it flat with both hands.

Abram moves beside him.

Rafa hangs back.

Mateo points to the first item.

Abram nods.

ABRAM

Got it.

Next.

ABRAM

Yes.

Next.

ABRAM

Plenty.

Mateo moves farther down.

Another check.

Another.

His expression gradually softens.

Despite Rafa's incompetence—
most of it is here.

Then Mateo reaches one item.

ABRAM

No.

Mateo looks up.

MATEO

No?

ABRAM

Don't have one available.

Mateo taps the paper.

MATEO

Jackleg.

Abram shakes his head.

ABRAM

Not one I'd put underground.
Mateo appreciates the distinction.
Rafa leans against the vehicle.

RAFA

You mean Carlos?
Mateo looks over.

MATEO

Don't start.
Abram looks between them.

ABRAM

Who's Carlos?

RAFA

Carlos the Jackal.
Abram waits.

MATEO

Old jackleg we had growing up.

RAFA

I couldn't say jackleg.

MATEO

He kept calling it a jackal.

RAFA

I was six.

MATEO

Pops thought it was funny. Started
calling the damn thing Carlos the
Jackal.

RAFA

Best drill we ever had.

MATEO

You were six. You didn't drill shit.

RAFA

Carlos did.

A beat.

RAFA

Carlos loved to drill.
Mateo looks at him.
Rafa can't resist.

RAFA

Didn't matter what you put in front
of him. Carlos drilled 'em all.

Mateo closes his eyes.
There it is.

MATEO
Knew you'd fuck up a perfectly good
story.
Abram laughs.

ABRAM
I'm beginning to understand your
brother.

MATEO
Don't. You'll encourage him.
Rafa smiles, pleased with himself.
Abram looks back at the list.

ABRAM
Well, Carlos isn't here.
He taps JACKLEG.

ABRAM
But I know where there's one.
Mateo immediately returns to business.

MATEO
Good one?

ABRAM
Very.

MATEO
Available?
Abram considers the wording.

ABRAM
We'll find out.

MATEO
Where?
Abram folds the list.

ABRAM
On the way.
He hands it back.

ABRAM
Man named Justo.
Mateo takes the list.

MATEO
He sell equipment?

ABRAM
Sometimes.

Abram closes the tailgate.

ABRAM

Depends on Justo.

Rafa opens the passenger door.

RAFA

See?

Mateo looks at him.

RAFA

Handled.

Mateo tosses his bag into the 4x4.

MATEO

Get in the fucking truck.

Rafa grins.

They climb aboard.

Abram gets behind the wheel.

The engine turns over.

The 4x4 pulls away from the airport—
toward the Andes.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD OUT OF JULIACA — DAY

Abram's aging 4x4 moves across the high Andean plain.

Juliaca slowly falls away behind them.

The road stretches toward distant mountains.

Inside the truck, Mateo watches the landscape through the
window.

Every so often he takes a deeper breath than normal.

The altitude is still reminding him where he is.

INT. ABRAM'S 4X4 — MOVING — DAY

Abram drives.

Rafa rides beside him.

Mateo sits in back, the battered equipment list in his
hands.

MATEO

How far out of the way is this guy?

ABRAM

Not far.

MATEO

That's what he said about La
Rinconada.

Mateo points at Rafa.

RAFA

I said a few hours.

MATEO

You said "depends on the mountain."

ABRAM

It does.

Mateo looks from one to the other.

MATEO

I'm starting to hate that answer.

Abram smiles.

ABRAM

You'll hear it again.

Mateo folds the list.

MATEO

Justo a miner?

ABRAM

Miner. Mechanic. Whatever pays.

MATEO

Good?

ABRAM

Very.

RAFA

You trust him?

Abram considers it.

ABRAM

I trust him to know a machine.

Mateo notices the wording.

But Abram keeps driving.

ABRAM

Adán's the one waiting for us in La Rinconada.

MATEO

Your other guy.

Abram nods.

ABRAM

Young. Good underground. Works hard.

A beat.

ABRAM

Wife. Little one at home.

MATEO

How little?

ABRAM

Little enough he doesn't sleep much.
Mateo smiles.
He understands that.

ABRAM

Adán was coming with me either way.
Mateo looks at the list.

MATEO

And Justo?

ABRAM

Justo has your jackleg.
Rafa turns slightly toward Mateo.

RAFA

See? Everything works out.
Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

You haven't done anything.

RAFA

Delegation.
Mateo shakes his head.
The truck continues toward the mountains.

EXT. MINING EQUIPMENT WORKSHOP — DAY

A rough equipment yard beside the road.
Corrugated metal.
Old compressors.
Coiled air hoses.
Drill steel.
Machine parts.
A welding rig.
Equipment in various states of repair sits everywhere.
Abram's 4x4 pulls in.
The engine shuts off.
Mateo steps down.
Looks around.
This place makes sense to him.
Abram heads toward the workshop.
Rafa and Mateo follow.
Before they reach the entrance—
the metal door opens.
THREE MEN emerge.
They don't look like miners.
The first two are thick-built, hard-looking men.
The third walks between them.
Mid-forties.

Calm.

Controlled.

A black OUROBOROS climbs from beneath his collar along the side of his neck – a snake consuming its own tail, arranged like a sideways figure-eight.

Beneath one eye, where a teardrop might sit, is a small BLACK SKULL.

He has the kind of face that doesn't need to threaten anyone.

He knows people are already watching him.

The groups approach each other.

Narrow passage.

Nobody gives way.

One of the henchmen deliberately drives his shoulder into Mateo's chest as he passes.

Hard.

Mateo stops.

Turns.

The henchman turns too.

HENCHMAN

¿Qué miras?

Mateo stares at him.

No fear.

No movement either.

Rafa has stopped several feet away.

But Rafa isn't looking only at the man who hit his brother.

He's looking at all three.

Hands.

Waistbands.

Faces.

Shoes.

Vehicle.

Tattoo.

The tattooed man turns.

Looks Mateo over.

Then his eyes settle on Rafa.

A beat.

The corner of his mouth rises.

Not friendly.

Predatory.

Rafa gives him nothing.

RAFA

Mateo.

Mateo keeps staring at the henchman.

RAFA

We got somewhere to be.

Mateo finally looks at his brother.
 Rafa gives the slightest movement toward the workshop.
 Let it go.
 The tattooed man watches the exchange.

TATTOOED MAN

Buen consejo.
 Good advice.
 Mateo turns away.
 The three men continue toward their vehicle.
 Rafa watches them.
 Especially the tattooed man.
 The tattooed man looks back once.
 That same ugly smile.
 Then gets into the vehicle.
 They drive away.
 A voice behind them—

JUSTO

Problem?
 Mateo and Rafa turn.
 JUSTO stands in the workshop doorway.
 Forties.
 Lean.
 Grease on his hands.
 Work shirt with the sleeves rolled.
 A shop rag over one shoulder.
 Not imposing.
 Not nervous.
 Just comfortable in his own place.
 Abram looks toward the departing vehicle.

ABRAM

Your friends?
 Justo glances after them.

JUSTO

Customers.

ABRAM

Friendly customers.
 Justo wipes his hands.

JUSTO

They paid.
 A beat.

JUSTO

That's friendly enough.
 He smiles.
 Then sees Abram properly.

JUSTO

Abram.

ABRAM

Justo.

They clasp hands and pull into a brief shoulder embrace.

Real familiarity.

Abram gestures toward Mateo and Rafa.

ABRAM

Mateo. Rafael.

Justo offers Mateo his hand.

JUSTO

Justo.

Mateo takes it.

MATEO

Mateo.

Justo looks between the brothers.

JUSTO

Brothers?

RAFA

Unfortunately.

MATEO

I'm adopted.

Justo looks between them.

JUSTO

Which one?

Mateo and Rafa point at each other.

MATEO / RAFA

Him.

Justo laughs.

JUSTO

All right.

He gestures them inside.

JUSTO

What brings you all the way out here?

Abram doesn't bother easing into it.

ABRAM

I need the jackleg.

Justo stops.

Looks at him.

JUSTO

Mine's not for sale.

ABRAM

Didn't ask to buy it.
Justo studies Abram.

JUSTO

Then you're asking to borrow it.

ABRAM

I'm asking to borrow you.
Justo looks at him.

JUSTO

You can't afford me.

ABRAM

I haven't told you what we're doing
yet.

JUSTO

Then you definitely can't afford me.
Rafa smiles.
Mateo looks around the workshop.
Parts everywhere.
But organized.
Not clean.
Organized.
There's a difference.
Mateo notices a JACKLEG on a workbench.
Partially serviced.
He approaches.

MATEO

That it?
Justo looks over.

JUSTO

That's it.
Mateo examines it without touching.
Justo notices that too.

JUSTO

You know jacklegs?

MATEO

Twenty-seven years underground.
Justo's expression changes slightly.
Professional interest.
He walks over.

JUSTO

Then touch it.
Mateo does.
Checks the drill.

Hose connections.
Leg.
Controls.
Wear.

MATEO
You've rebuilt it.

JUSTO
Twice.

MATEO
How old?

JUSTO
Old enough to know better.
Mateo smiles.

MATEO
Runs?
Justo looks almost offended.

JUSTO
Runs better than most men I know.

RAFA
Does it drill 'em all?
Mateo immediately looks at him.

MATEO
Don't.
Rafa raises his hands.

RAFA
Didn't say Carlos.
Justo looks between them.

JUSTO
Who's Carlos?

MATEO
Nobody.

RAFA
Legend.
Mateo ignores him.
Justo reaches for the jackleg.

JUSTO
Come on.
He moves it toward a test area.

EXT. JUSTO'S WORKSHOP — REAR YARD — MOMENTS LATER
A compressor rattles to life.
Justo connects the line.

Mateo watches.
Justo positions the jackleg against a test block of hard rock.
He opens the air.
THE JACKLEG HAMMERS.
Hard.
Clean.
Controlled.
Justo works it effortlessly.
Mateo watches the machine.
Then Justo.
Justo shuts it down.
Silence.

JUSTO

Good enough?
Mateo examines the bit.

MATEO

Good machine.
Justo pats it.

JUSTO

Good mechanic.
Mateo smiles.
Fair enough.

ABRAM

We're headed to La Rinconada.
Justo looks at Abram.

JUSTO

Where?
Abram tells him the working.
Justo's expression says he knows it.

JUSTO

How long?

ABRAM

Depends.
Mateo closes his eyes.

MATEO

Don't say it.
Abram smiles.

ABRAM

On the mountain.
Justo laughs.
Mateo shakes his head.

JUSTO

Take the drill.

Abram looks at him.

ABRAM

That's easy.

Justo points toward the jackleg.

JUSTO

You break it, you bought it.

He looks at Mateo.

JUSTO

And if that compressor starts acting
up above Ananea, don't come crying
to me.

Mateo looks at the machine.

Then at Justo.

MATEO

Then come with it.

Justo wasn't expecting that.

JUSTO

What?

MATEO

You know the machine.

Mateo looks at Abram.

MATEO

We need another hand?

Abram considers Justo.

ABRAM

Wouldn't hurt.

Justo looks between them.

JUSTO

What's my cut?

There it is.

Abram smiles.

Now they're negotiating.

ABRAM

Depends how much we pull.

JUSTO

Then my cut depends how much I work.

MATEO

Fair.

Justo looks at Mateo.

JUSTO

You always agree this fast?

MATEO

When somebody makes sense.

Justo considers him.

Then extends his hand.

JUSTO

Justo.

Mateo looks at the offered hand.

MATEO

We already did that.

JUSTO

That was hello.

A beat.

JUSTO

This is business.

Mateo takes his hand.

They shake.

MATEO

Mateo.

Justo smiles.

Deal.

Rafa watches them.

RAFA

Beautiful.

Mateo releases Justo's hand.

MATEO

Don't.

RAFA

Didn't say anything.

Abram heads toward the truck.

ABRAM

Load it.

Justo looks toward his workshop.

Then at the jackleg.

Decision made.

He grabs his gear.

EXT. MINING EQUIPMENT WORKSHOP – MOMENTS LATER

The jackleg is secured in the 4x4.

Justo throws in a small duffel and tool bag.

Closes the rear.

Mateo climbs aboard.

Abram starts the engine.
 Rafa gets in.
 Justo takes one last look at his workshop.
 Then climbs inside.
 The 4x4 pulls back onto the road.
 Four men now.
 Mateo.
 Rafa.
 Abram.
 Justo.
 Behind them, the workshop disappears.
 Ahead—
 the Andes rise.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANDEAN HIGHWAY — DAY
 Abram's 4x4 climbs through the Andes.
 The landscape has changed.
 Green has become scarce.
 Trees are gone.
 The road cuts through enormous stretches of rock, dirt and
 mountain beneath a hard blue sky.
 The 4x4 looks very small out here.

INT. ABRAM'S 4X4 — MOVING — DAY
 Abram drives.
 Rafa rides shotgun.
 Mateo and Justo sit in back.
 The JACKLEG is secured with the rest of the equipment
 behind them.
 Mateo looks out the window.
 Justo catches him taking another deep breath.

JUSTO
 Head hurt yet?

MATEO
 No.

JUSTO
 It will.

MATEO
 Good to know.

JUSTO
 Nausea?

MATEO
 No.

JUSTO
That comes later.
Mateo looks at him.

MATEO
Anything else I should look forward
to?
Justo thinks.

JUSTO
Bad sleep. No appetite. Short breath.
A beat.

JUSTO
Bad decisions.
Rafa turns around.

RAFA
He's had that one for years.
Mateo gives him the finger.
Justo laughs.
Abram keeps his eyes on the road.

ABRAM
Drink water.
Mateo reaches for his bottle.

ABRAM
Slow.
Mateo stops.
Looks at him.

ABRAM
You're not thirsty. You're climbing.
Mateo takes a smaller drink.

MATEO
How high are we now?
Abram checks the road ahead.

ABRAM
Fourteen.
Mateo looks outside.

MATEO
Thousand?

RAFA
Unless Peru switched to meters.

MATEO
Fuck you.
Rafa smiles.

EXT. ANDEAN ROAD – LATER

The 4x4 climbs.

A battered BUS crawls in the opposite direction.

Trucks carry fuel, food, equipment, lumber.

Everything heading upward.

Everything necessary for life has to come from somewhere else.

INT. ABRAM'S 4X4 – MOVING – LATER

Mateo watches a truck loaded with sacks and crates pass them.

MATEO

Nothing grows up here.

ABRAM

Not much.

Mateo gestures toward Rafa.

MATEO

Reminds me of somebody.

Rafa turns around.

RAFA

Fuck you.

Mateo looks back out the window.

MATEO

So everything comes up this road?

ABRAM

Food. Water. Fuel. Machines.

JUSTO

People.

Rafa looks out his window.

A YOUNG WOMAN walks along the roadside.

Beautiful.

Dark hair pulled back against the wind.

She carries a bag over one shoulder as she makes her way toward a nearby building.

Rafa follows her with his eyes.

She catches him looking.

For a moment, they hold each other's gaze.

Then—

the smallest smile from her.

Rafa smiles back.

She continues walking.

Rafa watches her disappear behind the building.

RAFA

Some things grow just fine.

Mateo turns.
He catches the last glimpse of the woman.
Then looks at Rafa.

MATEO
Jesus Christ.

RAFA
What?

MATEO
We haven't even got there yet.

RAFA
I'm acclimating.
Justo laughs.
Abram shakes his head and keeps driving.

JUSTO
Everybody comes looking for the same
thing.

MATEO
Gold.
Justo nods.

JUSTO
Gold.
A beat.

JUSTO
Then they find everything else.
Mateo looks at him.

MATEO
What's everything else?
Justo smiles.

JUSTO
Depends on the mountain.
Mateo stares at him.
Abram laughs.
Rafa turns around, delighted.

RAFA
He's learning.

MATEO
I'm gonna throw one of you out of
this truck.

EXT. ROAD — LATER
The paved road gives way to something rougher.
The 4x4 bucks through ruts.

Snow appears on distant peaks.
The sky feels closer.
The settlements become smaller.
Rougher.
Mining equipment becomes more common.
So do men in work clothes.
Ore trucks.
Makeshift structures.
The world is changing.

INT. ABRAM'S 4X4 – MOVING – DAY
Justo looks toward Mateo.

JUSTO
Twenty-seven years.

MATEO
Yeah.

JUSTO
Same mine?

MATEO
Mostly.

JUSTO
United States?

MATEO
Yeah.

JUSTO
Different underground.

MATEO
Rock's rock.
Justo smiles.

JUSTO
That's what everybody says.
Mateo looks at him.

MATEO
You disagree?

JUSTO
Rock doesn't change.
Justo gestures toward the mountains.

JUSTO
Everything around it does.
Mateo considers that.

MATEO
How long you been doing this?

JUSTO

Long enough.

MATEO

That's not a number.

JUSTO

Then don't ask questions you don't
need answered.

There's no hostility in it.

Justo smiles.

Mateo does too.

Fair enough.

MATEO

You always work alone?

JUSTO

Mostly.

MATEO

No crew?

JUSTO

When I need one.

MATEO

Family?

Justo looks out the window.

A beat.

JUSTO

No wife.

RAFA

Smart man.

Abram looks at Rafa.

ABRAM

You've never been married.

RAFA

Exactly.

Justo laughs.

Mateo shakes his head.

MATEO

Kids?

JUSTO

None I know about.

Rafa turns around.

Points at him.

RAFA

See? Now I like him.

MATEO

You liked him when he had a drill.

RAFA

That helped.

Justo looks at Mateo.

JUSTO

You?

Mateo's expression changes.

Just slightly.

MATEO

Yeah.

JUSTO

Kids?

MATEO

Family.

That's enough.

Justo nods.

Doesn't pry.

EXT. HIGH ANDEAN ROAD — LATE AFTERNOON

The 4x4 rounds another mountain.

Clouds move below some of the surrounding peaks.

Then—

something appears in the distance.

At first it looks like debris scattered across the mountainside.

Metal.

Mud.

Roofs.

Thousands of structures climbing over one another.

Mateo leans forward.

MATEO

That's it?

Abram doesn't answer immediately.

Rafa looks ahead.

Justo does too.

They've all seen it before.

Mateo hasn't.

The 4x4 climbs higher.

And LA RINCONADA reveals itself.

A dense, sprawling settlement pressed against the mountain.

Corrugated roofs.

Unfinished buildings.
 Mud roads.
 Mining works.
 Trucks.
 People.
 Smoke.
 Everything stacked impossibly high beneath the glacier.
 Mateo stares.
 This isn't what he pictured.

MATEO
 People live here?

JUSTO
 A lot of people.

MATEO
 Up here?

ABRAM
 You're up here.
 Mateo looks toward the mountain above the settlement.
 Then the glacier.
 Then the city beneath it.

MATEO
 Jesus Christ.
 Rafa turns around.

RAFA
 Welcome to La Rinconada.

EXT. LA RINCONADA — LATE AFTERNOON
 The 4x4 enters the settlement.
 The road narrows.
 People everywhere.
 Miners.
 Women carrying bags.
 Children moving between buildings.
 Motorcycles.
 Dogs.
 Trucks.
 Vendors.
 Mud.
 Metal.
 Noise.
 Life.
 Mateo watches through the window.
 A CHILD kicks a worn soccer ball between two corrugated buildings.
 Nearby, a miner in filthy clothes buys bread.

A woman pours water from a large plastic container.
 A generator coughs somewhere behind a building.
 A truck unloads sacks of food.
 Mateo sees all of it.
 Not a mining camp.
 A town.
 A home.
 Just one built somewhere human beings probably shouldn't be
 living.

INT. ABRAM'S 4X4 – MOVING – CONTINUOUS

Mateo notices a miner carrying equipment down the road.

MATEO

Where's our working?

Abram points higher toward the mountain.

ABRAM

Above us.

Mateo follows his finger.

MATEO

Of course it is.

Justo smiles.

JUSTO

You wanted gold.

MATEO

I wanted money.

RAFA

Same thing.

MATEO

Not until we get it home.

That lands differently.

Abram looks at Mateo through the mirror.

He understands exactly what Mateo means.

EXT. ADÁN'S NEIGHBORHOOD – LATE AFTERNOON

The 4x4 turns away from the busier road.

The buildings become more residential.

If the word applies here.

Small structures.

Corrugated metal.

Concrete block.

Improvised additions.

Water containers.

Laundry.

Children.

Abram slows.
Then stops outside a modest home.
The engine shuts off.
Mateo looks through the windshield.

MATEO

This Adán?

ABRAM

This is Adán.
The front door opens.
A young man steps out.
ADÁN.
Late twenties.
Compact.
Strong.
Work-worn despite his age.
He sees Abram.
His face lights up.

ADÁN

¡Abram!
Abram gets out.
Adán comes toward him.
They embrace.
Warmly.
No hesitation.
Abram holds him by the shoulders afterward.
Looks him over.

ABRAM

You eating?

ADÁN

Sometimes.

ABRAM

You look skinny.

ADÁN

You look old.

Abram smiles.

ABRAM

Good. Still disrespectful.
Adán laughs.
Then notices the others getting out.
Mateo.
Rafa.
Justo.
Adán's eyes stop on Justo.
A flicker of surprise.

ADÁN

Justo?
Justo lifts a hand.

JUSTO

Adán.
Adán looks at Abram.

ADÁN

I thought it was us.
Abram gestures toward Mateo.

ABRAM

Blame the American.
Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

Already?
Abram smiles.

ABRAM

Mateo.
Adán approaches.
Extends his hand.

ADÁN

Adán.
Mateo shakes it.

MATEO

Good to meet you.
Abram gestures toward Rafa.

ABRAM

His brother, Rafael.
Rafa shakes Adán's hand.

RAFA

Rafa.
A WOMAN appears in the doorway behind Adán.
She holds a small CHILD against her hip.
Adán turns.
Something immediately changes in him.
Softer.
He walks back toward them.

ADÁN

Mi amor.
He takes the child.
The child grabs at his face.
Adán kisses the child's forehead.
Mateo watches.
Adán gestures toward the group.

His wife looks at four travelers standing outside her home.
 Then smiles.
 She says something to Adán in Spanish.
 Adán looks toward them.

ADÁN

She says you don't leave hungry.
 Rafa looks at Mateo.

RAFA

I like her already.
 Mateo smiles.
 Adán's wife steps aside.
 An invitation.
 Abram heads toward the door.
 Justo follows.
 Rafa follows.
 Mateo remains outside for one second longer.
 He watches Adán carry his child into the little house.
 Thousands of miles from Mateo's own family.
 Mateo looks up at the mountain.
 Then enters.

CUT TO:

INT. ADÁN AND MARISA'S HOME — LATE AFTERNOON

Mateo steps inside.
 Small.
 Warm.
 Modest, but cared for.
 The cold of La Rinconada stays on the other side of the walls as best it can.
 Stored water sits against one wall. Sacks and containers of food are stacked where space allows.
 A large pot simmers.
 The smell fills the room.
 MARISA moves toward the table.
 ADÁN still holds their young daughter, LILIANA.
 Liliana coughs.
 Not violently.
 Just a small, stubborn cough.
 Adán looks at her.

ADÁN

Still coughing?

MARISA

A little.

ADÁN

Fever?

MARISA

No.

She touches Liliana's forehead.

MARISA

I called Mari.

Adán nods.

Rafa looks toward Marisa.

RAFA

Mari?

MARISA

My sister.

Marisa begins setting out bowls.

Abram makes himself useful without asking. He moves things around to make room for everybody.

Justo sets some of the gear aside.

Mateo looks around the little home.

Then toward the pot.

MARISA

Sit.

MATEO

You sure?

Marisa looks at the four additional men her husband has just brought into her home.

MARISA

Sit.

Mateo does.

So does everybody else.

LATER

Bowls of CHAIRO are passed around the table.

A hearty soup of potatoes, chuño, vegetables and meat.

Bread sits within reach.

Steam rises from the bowls.

Everybody eats.

Mateo tastes the chairo.

Looks toward Marisa.

MATEO

This is good.

MARISA

Thank you.

MATEO

And thank you for feeding all of us.

Marisa gestures toward Adán.

MARISA

You're Adán's guests.
A small shrug.

MARISA

You're our guests.
Mateo nods.
He appreciates that.
A KNOCK at the door.
Marisa gets up.
She opens it.
MARICELA enters carrying a small medical bag.
Beautiful.
Not dressed for anyone's attention. Practical clothes. Hair
pulled back. She has come because her sister called her.
Rafa notices immediately.
Marisa takes the bag from her.

MARISA

Mari.
Rafa looks from Marisa to Maricela.

RAFA

I thought you were Mari.

MARISA

I am.
Maricela removes her outer layer.

MARICELA

So am I.
Rafa looks between the sisters.
Already confused.
Marisa smiles.

MARISA

My sister. Maricela.
Maricela greets Abram.
She knows him.
Adán introduces the others.

ADÁN

Mateo. Rafael. Justo.
Maricela gives each a polite greeting.
Her eyes reach Rafa last.

RAFA

Rafa.

MARICELA

I heard.
Rafa watches her move immediately toward Liliana.

No time for him.
Maricela sits beside the little girl.
She removes a STETHOSCOPE from her medical bag.
Listens to Liliana's chest.
Then her back.

MARICELA

Otra vez.
Liliana takes another breath.
A small cough.
Maricela feels her forehead.

MARICELA

Any fever?

MARISA

No.

MARICELA

Eating?

MARISA

Yes.

MARICELA

Sleeping?

MARISA

Mostly.
Maricela listens again.
Liliana looks suspiciously at the stethoscope.
Maricela smiles at her.
Nothing alarming.

MARICELA

Keep her warm. Make sure she's
drinking.

Marisa nods.

MARISA

And if she gets worse?

MARICELA

Bring her down to the clinic. I'll
be there tomorrow.

ADÁN

Which one are you at now?

MARICELA

The one with the crooked cross.
Adán thinks.

MARICELA

Next to the old yellow hotel.

ADÁN

El Lagarto?

MARICELA

Yes. The one with the big lizard
over the door.

Rafa looks over.

RAFA

There's a hotel with a giant lizard?

MARICELA

You haven't seen it?

RAFA

I'd remember a giant lizard.

MARICELA

Then you'll remember the clinic.

Rafa looks at her.

RAFA

I'll remember something.

Maricela gives him a look.

Mateo sees it.

MATEO

Jesus Christ.

Rafa ignores him.

Maricela puts away the stethoscope.

As she does, she notices Mateo rubbing his temple.

MARICELA

Headache?

Mateo looks at her.

MATEO

Little.

MARICELA

First day this high?

MATEO

That obvious?

MARICELA

You're breathing like the air owes
you money.

Mateo smiles.

MATEO

It does.

MARICELA

Drink. Eat. Take it slow.

JUSTO

I already told him.

MARICELA

Then for once, listen to Justo.
Justo raises his bowl toward Mateo.
Mateo shakes his head.

LATER

The meal continues.
Maricela now has a bowl.
Rafa looks between the sisters.

RAFA

Marisa. Maricela.
He considers the names.

RAFA

Your parents really liked "Mari."
The sisters look at one another.
They've heard this before.

MARISA

Our father would stand outside and
yell—

MARISA

¡Mari!

MARICELA

And we'd both come running.

MARISA

Then he'd get angry.

MARICELA

"No, no. Marisa."

MARISA

Or—

MARICELA

"No, no. Maricela."

MARISA

So we'd ask him—

Together:

MARISA / MARICELA

Which Mari?

They laugh.

MARICELA

He never learned.
Rafa looks at Mateo.

RAFA

Pops just yelled, "¡Pendejo!"
Mateo nods.

MATEO

We'd both come running.
The table breaks into laughter.
The laughter settles.
Mateo takes another spoonful.
Then looks toward Abram.
Business now.

MATEO

So tell me about this working.
Abram puts down his spoon.

ABRAM

It's old.
A beat.

ABRAM

Not abandoned. Old.

MATEO

Difference being?

ABRAM

Abandoned means nobody wants it.
Abram wipes his mouth.

ABRAM

People still want this one.
Mateo listens.

ABRAM

They followed the main vein years ago. Took what was easy and kept moving.
Abram gestures slightly with his hand as though tracing the underground working across the table.

ABRAM

There's a branch off the lower working that never got much attention.

MATEO

Why?

ABRAM

Narrow. Hard rock. Slow money.

JUSTO

Nobody likes slow money.

ABRAM

Especially when there's easier
ground twenty meters away.

Mateo understands immediately.

MATEO

You think they walked past something.

ABRAM

I think they followed what they
could see.

Abram looks directly at him.

ABRAM

I'm interested in what they couldn't.

Mateo sits with that.

MATEO

Who controls it?

ABRAM

The cooperative. I know the people
running that section. They know
we're coming.

MATEO

We have permission?

ABRAM

Yes.

MATEO

In writing?

Abram gives him a look.

ABRAM

You're not in Texas anymore.

Mateo doesn't laugh.

MATEO

That's not an answer.

Abram recognizes that Mateo isn't challenging him.
He simply wants to know.

ABRAM

They know we're coming. They know
why. They know the arrangement.

A beat.

ABRAM

Nobody is running us out.

MATEO

Their cut?

ABRAM

Twenty percent of what comes out.

MATEO

And the rest?

ABRAM

Ours.

Mateo nods.

MATEO

That's what I wanted to hear.

Mateo's attention shifts completely now.

Miner to miner.

MATEO

How deep?

Abram looks toward Adán.

Adán answers without hesitation.

ADÁN

Main level runs about six hundred meters. Lower branch drops another hundred and fifty. Our section comes off the lower working.

Mateo looks at the younger man.

MATEO

Ventilation?

ADÁN

Natural through most of it.

A beat.

ADÁN

Gets bad deeper in.

MATEO

Water?

ADÁN

Some.

MATEO

Clean?

Abram gives Mateo a look.

ABRAM

Don't drink anything that comes out

of that mountain.

MATEO
Processing nearby?

ABRAM
Everywhere.
Abram gestures vaguely toward the world outside.

ABRAM
Gold comes out.
A beat.

ABRAM
Chemicals stay.
Mateo knows where he's going.

MATEO
Mercury?
ABRAM
Mercury. Waste. Tailings. Whatever
somebody upstream decided wasn't
their problem anymore.
Mateo's eyes drift toward Liliana.
Then toward the family's stored water.

MATEO
And people live underneath it.
Abram follows his eyes.

ABRAM
People live where the work is.
A beat.

MATEO
Same everywhere.
ABRAM
Just easier to see here.
Mateo looks at him.
Nothing more needs saying.

MATEO
Ground?

ADÁN
First part is hard. Dry.
Mateo looks toward him again.

ADÁN
Past the second bend on the lower
working, it changes.

MATEO

How?

ADÁN

Water starts showing along the left wall.

MATEO

How much?

ADÁN

Not much.

Adán thinks.

ADÁN

Enough that the bolts on that side rust faster.

Mateo stops eating.

Now Adán has his full attention.

MATEO

Roof?

ADÁN

Sounds different there.

MATEO

Different how?

Adán taps the table.

Sharp.

ADÁN

Before the bend.

Then another tap.

Duller.

ADÁN

After.

Mateo studies him.

MATEO

You sound the ground every time?

ADÁN

Every time I don't want it landing on me.

Mateo gives him the smallest nod.

Respect.

MATEO

Secondary escapeway?

ADÁN

I walked it three weeks ago.

MATEO

We'll walk it again.

ADÁN

I was going to.

Another look between them.

MATEO

Good.

Rafa continues eating.

RAFA

So before we actually do anything,
we're gonna walk around looking for
ways to get out?

MATEO

Before we do anything.

JUSTO

He's right.

Rafa looks at Justo.

RAFA

I liked you better twenty minutes
ago.

JUSTO

Twenty minutes ago I wasn't
underground with you.

Rafa points his spoon at him.

Fair enough.

Abram looks toward Mateo.

ABRAM

Mateo.

Mateo looks at him.

ABRAM

I know this mountain.

A beat.

ABRAM

You know your work.

Mateo listens.

ABRAM

I'm not going to tell you how to
mine.

Abram leans back.

ABRAM

You don't tell me how to move around
here.

A beat.

ABRAM

Where those two things meet—

MATEO

We talk.

Abram smiles.

ABRAM

We talk.

That's enough.

An agreement between two miners.

LATER

Bowls have emptied.

Bread has disappeared.

The conversation has loosened again.

Liliana rests against Marisa.

The little girl's eyes are getting heavy.

Mateo notices the sidearm at Adán's side.

MATEO

I'm finding a lot of surprises
around your place, Adán.

He nods toward the weapon.

MATEO

Everybody carry out here?

Adán looks at him like it's an odd question.

ADÁN

Everybody stays strapped here.

Abram casually pulls his jacket aside.

Armed.

Justo does the same.

Mateo looks around.

MATEO

Well, shit.

Rafa looks at his brother.

RAFA

Bro.

Mateo turns to him.

RAFA

I think we're the only two assholes
here without guns.

Abram smiles.

ABRAM

Don't worry. I got you. I'm not

gonna leave you two empty-handed.
Rafa nods approvingly.

RAFA

See? That's hospitality.
Justo's attention shifts toward a CHARANGO nearby.

JUSTO

Hey. Look what else I found.
He reaches for it.
Turns it over in his hands.
Settles back.
And without another word—
Justo begins to play.
"CANTANDO Y BAILANDO."
Lively.
Immediate.
Adán recognizes it.
He reaches for a QUENA.
Joins Justo.
The room changes.
Hands begin clapping.
A rhythm against the table.
Feet moving.
Marisa laughs.
Maricela gets pulled into it.
Rafa needs no invitation.
Soon he's part of the celebration.
Mateo watches at first.
Then somebody pulls him in too.
The evening dissolves into moments.
Justo on charango.
Adán on quena.
Marisa and Maricela laughing together.
Abram clapping along.
Rafa dancing.
Mateo laughing harder than he expected to.
Liliana, sleepy but smiling.
Food and drink scattered across the table.
Firelight moves across their faces.
Candle flames flicker.
Outside—
La Rinconada freezes beneath the mountain.
Inside—
music.
Warmth.
Food.
Laughter.

For a while, nobody talks about gold.
 Nobody talks about mines.
 Nobody talks about tomorrow.
 Mateo sits back eventually.
 Takes it all in.
 People who were strangers that morning.
 Now sharing a table.
 Justo keeps playing.
 Adán keeps pace beside him.
 The music carries the night.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. ADÁN AND MARISA'S HOME — BEFORE DAWN

Blue morning darkness.

Bitter cold.

Frost clings to TWO 4x4s and the rugged flatbed behind each one.

An ENGINE turns.

RRR-RRR-RRR—

Again.

RRR-RRR—

It catches.

Headlights come alive.

Equipment is loaded.

Packs.

Water.

Food.

Lamps.

Tools.

THREE JACKLEG DRILLS.

Abram checks the first load.

Justo secures the second.

Mateo checks his own gear.

Abram opens a small case. Two sidearms.

He hands one to Mateo. One to Rafa.

The brothers check them, then holster them.

No speech. Abram already told them he wouldn't leave them empty-handed.

Maricela is gone.

She left the previous night.

INT. ADÁN AND MARISA'S HOME — BEFORE DAWN

Marisa packs food into a bag.

Enough to carry Adán through the day.

She closes it.

Hands it to him.

MARISA

For later.

ADÁN

Gracias.

Liliana appears.

Sleepy.

Wrapped against the cold.

Adán's face changes when he sees her.

He crouches.

Liliana walks into his arms.

He lifts her.

She coughs once against his shoulder.

Adán kisses her forehead.

Then her cheek.

ADÁN

Be good for Mamá.

Liliana holds onto him.

Adán holds her for another moment.

Then gently hands her to Marisa.

He looks at his wife.

Marisa straightens his jacket.

A tiny domestic gesture.

Something she's done before.

Something neither of them believes is important.

Adán kisses her.

A husband leaving for work.

MARISA

Cuídate.

ADÁN

Siempre.

He kisses Liliana once more.

Then heads for the door.

EXT. ADÁN AND MARISA'S HOME — BEFORE DAWN

Adán steps outside.

The others are already waiting beside the two rigs.

Abram behind the wheel of the first 4x4.

Mateo and Rafa with him.

Justo behind the wheel of the second.

Adán heads for Justo's passenger side.

Before getting in, he looks toward the house.

Marisa stands in the doorway holding Liliana.

Adán raises his hand.

Marisa raises hers.

Liliana does the same.
 Adán gets in.
 The door shuts.
 Abram puts the first 4x4 into gear.
 Justo follows.
 The two rigs pull away, a flatbed behind each one.
 Marisa remains in the doorway with her daughter.
 Watching until the taillights disappear.

EXT. LA RINCONADA – BEFORE DAWN
 Two 4x4s climb through the waking settlement.
 A rugged flatbed behind each.
 Abram leads with Mateo and Rafa.
 Justo follows with Adán.
 Equipment, supplies and three jacklegs ride with the
 convoy.
 Higher.
 Toward the mine.
 Toward the working.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH ANDEAN ROAD – MORNING
 The two-vehicle convoy climbs away from La Rinconada.
 The settlement slowly falls behind them.
 Ahead—
 mountain.
 Rock.
 Snow.
 Mining roads cut into the landscape.
 The sun is only beginning to clear the surrounding peaks.

INT. ABRAM'S 4X4 – MOVING – MORNING
 Abram drives.
 Rafa rides beside him.
 Mateo rides in back.
 In the mirror, Justo's 4x4 follows with Adán, its flatbed
 tracking behind.
 Abram's own flatbed rattles behind them.
 Mateo watches the terrain.
 They pass an active working.
 Men move equipment.
 Others haul material.
 Abram gestures toward it.

ABRAM

See that?

Mateo looks.

ABRAM

Everybody sees the same thing.
Another scar across the mountain.

ABRAM

Vein shows itself, men follow it.
They pass another group of miners.

ABRAM

Somebody starts bringing good rock
out—
Abram gestures toward the activity.

ABRAM

Everybody wants to know where he got
it.
Mateo watches the men disappear behind them.

ABRAM

What I'm interested in doesn't look
interesting.

MATEO

That's why nobody's working it.

ABRAM

That's what I'm counting on.
Abram points toward a route cutting across the mountain.

ABRAM

Our working's that way.
Mateo looks toward it.
Then—
Abram turns the lead 4x4 in the OPPOSITE DIRECTION. Justo
follows.
Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

Then where the hell are we going?

ABRAM

Somewhere else.
Rafa turns around.

RAFA

That's reassuring.

ABRAM

We take the long way.
Abram keeps driving.

ABRAM

Anybody watching us sees five men
and a truck going somewhere that

doesn't matter.

MATEO

How much longer?

ABRAM

Better part of a day.

Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

We're losing a day.

ABRAM

We're buying one.

Mateo waits.

ABRAM

Nobody follows us tomorrow.

Mateo looks back toward the road they've left behind.

Then toward Abram.

He considers it.

MATEO

All right.

Abram drives.

MATEO

Your mountain.

Abram glances toward him.

ABRAM

Our gold.

EXT. HIGH ANDES – DAY

The two rigs become specks against the mountains.

TRAVEL SEQUENCE:

The convoy crawls along a narrow mountain road.

Rock rises on one side.

A long drop disappears on the other.

Both rigs buck violently through ruts.

Inside—

everybody gets thrown around.

Rafa catches himself against the dashboard.

LATER—

Rafa sleeps against the passenger
window.

His head bounces gently with every imperfection in the
road.

At a brief stop, Justo eats from the food Marisa packed and
passes some to Mateo.

Mateo takes it.

Later, Adán points from the second rig toward a fork in the road.

Abram sees the signal and takes it.

The convoy crosses another enormous stretch of empty landscape.

Nothing around them but mountain and sky.

A distant herd of ALPACAS moves across the high country.

Mateo watches them through the glass.

The road climbs again.

Snow appears closer now.

The men stand beside the stopped convoy.

Five figures pissing toward five thousand miles of mountain.

Nobody says anything.

Back inside.

The convoy moves again.

Hours pass.

At a roadside break, two empty cans sit against a bank of rock.

Mateo fires the sidearm Abram gave him. A can jumps.

Rafa takes his turn. Misses once. Hits the second.

Abram watches, satisfied they can handle what he gave them.

The weapons go back into their holsters.

The convoy moves on.

The sunlight changes.

Mateo watches the landscape.

Studying it.

Learning it.

EXT. HIGH ANDEAN CAMP – SUNSET

The two rigs pull into a sheltered area away from the road.

Engines die.

Silence.

Wind moves across the mountains.

The men climb out.

Tired.

No discussion necessary.

They're done traveling for the day.

LATER

A SMALL FIRE burns.

The five men sit around it.

Marisa's food is passed around.

Adán opens the bag she packed that morning.

Shares what he has.

Mateo eats.

Rafa eats.

Abram eats.

Justo eats.
 Nobody talks much.
 They've spent the entire day being shaken around inside a truck.
 Abram looks over a rough map and studies the route ahead.
 Adán points to something.
 Abram nods.
 Folds the map.
 Justo settles against his pack.
 Rafa lies back.
 Looks toward the sky.
 Stars spread across the Andes.
 Mateo removes his boots.
 Sets them beside him.
 He looks across the fire.
 Abram.
 Adán.
 Justo.
 Rafa.
 Five men.
 Tomorrow they work.
 The fire burns lower.

LATER

Embers glow.
 The wind has quieted.
 Five sleeping figures lie around the remains of the fire.
 Nothing moves beyond them.
 Nothing watches them.
 Nothing happens.
 Just five men sleeping beneath an enormous sky.

FADE TO:

EXT. HIGH ANDEAN CAMP – DAWN
 Cold blue light.
 Smoke curls from dying embers.
 A boot nudges Rafa.
 His eyes open.

RAFA

Fuck.
 Mateo stands over him.

MATEO

Morning.
 Rafa closes his eyes again.

RAFA

Fuck morning.

Mateo walks away.
The camp comes apart quickly.
Blankets rolled.
Packs closed.
Equipment checked.
The remains of the fire extinguished.
Everything goes back into the two rigs and their flatbeds.
Abram climbs behind the wheel. Justo does the same in the second rig.
Abram turns the key.
The engine struggles.
Then catches.
Justo's follows.

EXT. HIGH ANDES – MORNING
The convoy moves again.
But now—
Abram begins doubling back.
Different road.
Different approach.
The landscape gradually changes.
Signs of mining return.
Old tracks.
Cuts in the mountain.
Scattered equipment.
The world of the miners slowly reappears.

INT. ABRAM'S 4X4 – MOVING – MORNING
Mateo notices.

MATEO
We're coming back around.

ABRAM
Yeah.
Mateo looks ahead.

ABRAM
From this side, nobody saw where we started.
Mateo nods.
He understands the game now.
Rafa looks out the windshield.

RAFA
So are we finally going to the fucking mine?
Abram smiles.

ABRAM

Now we're going to the mine.

EXT. HIGH ANDEAN ROAD – MORNING

The convoy rounds the mountain.

Ahead—

the first signs of the TRUE WORKING.

Abram leads the convoy toward it.

CUT TO:

EXT. REMOTE WORKING – MORNING

The two-vehicle convoy crawls over the final rise.

Then stops.

Nothing.

No miners.

No machinery running.

No voices.

Only wind moving across exposed rock.

Ahead—

an old vehicle-accessible ADIT cut into the mountain.

A DARK OPENING waits in the stone.

Abram kills the engine.

Silence.

Rafa looks through the windshield.

RAFA

This is it?

Abram opens his door.

ABRAM

This is it.

The men climb out.

Mateo takes in the site.

After everything they've traveled through—

this doesn't look like much.

Abram walks toward the entrance.

Stops.

Places his palm against the rock.

ABRAM

This is the spot.

Mateo joins him.

Looks into the darkness.

MATEO

Doesn't look like much.

ABRAM

That's why we're alone.

Mateo looks at him.

ABRAM

Everybody went where the mountain
made promises.
He looks toward the entrance.

ABRAM

Nobody stayed around here long
enough to ask questions.

MATEO

And you did.
Abram looks at him.

ABRAM

I started asking.
A beat.
Mateo looks into the working again.

MATEO

All right.
Abram turns toward the others.

ABRAM

Bring 'em in.

INT. PRIMARY HAULAGE ADIT – MOMENTS LATER

Headlights push into the mountain.
Abram drives the first 4x4 underground, flatbed behind him.
Justo follows with Adán in the second.
Both rigs fit, but not generously.
Deeper in, the haulage passage opens enough for the convoy
to stop clear of the entrance.
Engines shut down.
The crew moves.
Equipment is staged from the flatbeds.
Hoses organized.
Tools ready.
Water, fuel and supplies kept underground with the
vehicles.
Three jacklegs remain with the expedition.
Mateo directs placement without announcing that he's doing
it.

MATEO

Not there. Keep the haulage route
clear.
Rafa shifts a crate.

RAFA

Yes, Daddy.
Mateo walks straight past him.

MATEO

Keep moving.

Rafa grins.

LATER

Mateo looks over the staged gear and
the two rigs tucked inside the
mountain.

Nothing blocks the route out.

Satisfied.

Abram puts on his helmet.

Switches on his lamp.

Adán does the same.

Justo.

Mateo.

Rafa.

Five beams cut through the darkness.

Abram looks deeper into the working.

ABRAM

Ready?

Mateo switches his lamp toward the dark.

MATEO

Show me.

Abram leads them deeper.

Adán follows.

Mateo.

Rafa.

Justo.

The haulage adit narrows into the working beyond.

CUT TO:

INT. WORKING — CONTINUOUS

Darkness.

Then—

five HEADLAMPS moving through it.

Their beams cut narrow tunnels through suspended dust.

BOOTS grind against broken rock.

Water drips somewhere deeper inside.

Behind them, the entrance becomes smaller with every step.

Abram leads.

Adán behind him.

Mateo follows.

Rafa and Justo bring up the rear.

Mateo runs his hand along the wall as he walks.

Stops.

The others continue several steps before Abram notices.

He turns.

Mateo taps the rock.
TAP.
Listens.
Again.
TAP.
He looks toward Adán.

MATEO
This the hard ground you were
talking about?

ADÁN
Yeah.
Mateo gives the wall another look.

MATEO
Keep going.
They move deeper.

LATER
Adán rounds a bend.

ADÁN
Second bend.
Mateo's lamp immediately moves LEFT.
A thin sheen of MOISTURE glistens along the wall.
He moves closer.
Runs his fingers across it.
His light travels upward.
Several old ROCK BOLTS.
Rust eating into them.
Mateo looks toward Adán.

MATEO
There it is.
Adán nods.
Mateo sounds the rock.
TAP.
Sharp.
He moves several feet farther.
TAP.
Duller.
Mateo listens.
Looks up.
Then toward Adán.
The kid knew what he was talking about.
No compliment.
They continue.

DEEPER IN THE WORKING
The tunnel tightens.

Their five lamps rake across old cuts in the stone.
 Mateo stops again.
 This time he isn't looking at the rock.
 He's looking at the AIR.
 Millions of tiny particles float through his headlamp beam.
 Near the others—
 the dust drifts steadily.
 Here—
 it barely moves.
 Mateo reaches down.
 Scoops a little dry dust from a ledge.
 Holds it in his palm.
 He blows gently.
 A CLOUD OF DUST blooms into his headlamp.
 For several seconds it hangs there—
 almost motionless.
 Mateo watches.
 Rafa watches Mateo watching dust.

RAFA

What?

Mateo doesn't answer yet.
 The cloud finally begins creeping toward one side of the
 working.
 Slow.

MATEO

Air's dying.

Rafa takes a breath.

RAFA

Feels like air.

Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

That's why you're carrying shit.

Rafa gives him the finger.

Justo laughs.

Abram looks deeper into the working.

ABRAM

Gets worse from here.

Mateo watches the last of the dust disappear.

MATEO

Yeah.

He keeps moving.

A LITTLE FARTHER

Mateo suddenly stops.

His lamp goes UP.

A fracture runs through the rock overhead.

MATEO

Hold up.
Everybody stops.
Mateo studies it.
Moves his light along the fracture.

MATEO

Nobody walks under that.
Abram looks up.

ABRAM

Problem?

MATEO

Could be.

ABRAM

Could be isn't much of an answer.
Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

It's enough not to stand under it.
Abram considers that.
Then nods.
They move around it.

LATER

The working opens slightly.
An OLD ABANDONED EXPLORATION DRIFT branches away from the
productive route.
Mateo slows.
Shines his lamp into it.

MATEO

What's down there?

ADÁN

Nothing.

MATEO

How far?
Adán shrugs.

ADÁN

Far enough somebody got tired of
looking.
Mateo shines his lamp farther into the abandoned passage.
He says nothing.
Then keeps moving.
A little farther—
Abram stops.

This is what he's been waiting to show Mateo.

ABRAM

All right.
He points ahead.

ABRAM

This is where—

MATEO

Not yet.
Abram looks at him.
Mateo hasn't even examined the face.

MATEO

You said there's another way out.

ABRAM

There is.
Mateo looks toward Adán.

MATEO

You walked it three weeks ago.

ADÁN

Yeah.

MATEO

Still clear?

ADÁN

It was.
Mateo switches his attention completely away from Abram's
promising ground.

MATEO

Show me.
Adán looks toward the secondary passage.
Then starts walking.
Mateo follows.
Abram watches them go.
The gold can wait.

CUT TO:

INT. SECONDARY ESCAPEWAY — CONTINUOUS

Adán leads.
His headlamp cuts through a passage narrower and rougher
than the main working.
Abram follows.
Mateo behind him.
Rafa and Justo bring up the rear.
The walls close in.

Loose rock crunches beneath their boots.
 This is not the route anyone would choose if the main
 entrance were available.
 But it is a route.
 Mateo checks the roof as they move.
 The walls.
 The ground beneath them.
 Every few steps, his lamp travels ahead of Adán.
 Looking.
 Farther in—
 Adán steps around a pile of fallen rock partially narrowing
 the passage.
 Abram follows.
 Mateo stops.
 Rafa steps around it.

MATEO

Move that.

Rafa looks back.

RAFA

We can get around it.

MATEO

Right now we can.

Rafa waits.

Mateo points toward the obstruction.

MATEO

Try it hurt.

A beat.

MATEO

Or carrying somebody.

Rafa looks at the rocks again.

He gets it.

Adán comes back.

Starts moving the loose material.

Rafa joins him.

Justo steps in.

Abram helps.

Mateo does too.

Together they clear the passage.

Not spotless.

Clear enough that a man can move through it without having
 to climb around an obstruction.

They continue.

LATER

Darkness ahead.

Then—

a tiny point of WHITE.
Rafa sees it.

RAFA

There she is.

DAYLIGHT.

The point grows as they approach.
Cold air begins moving through the passage.
Stronger.
Their headlamp beams become less important.
Adán reaches the opening first.
Steps outside.

EXT. SECONDARY EXIT – DAY

Adán emerges onto the mountainside.
Abram follows.
Mateo.
Rafa.
Justo.
Five men back beneath open sky.
Wind hits them.
Mateo immediately turns around.
Looks back into the secondary opening.
Then studies the surrounding terrain.
The slope.
The mountain above them.
The direction from which they came underground.
He mentally places the working behind the rock.
Abram watches him.

ABRAM

Good?

Mateo looks into the opening once more.

MATEO

Good.

Abram nods.
That's all he needed.

ABRAM

Finally.

Mateo looks at him.

ABRAM

Now can I show you what we came all
this way for?
Mateo gives him the slightest smile.

MATEO

Almost.
Abram shakes his head.

Turns back toward the secondary.
Adán follows.
Justo after him.
They disappear inside.
Mateo doesn't.
He remains outside.
Looking across the mountain.
Then at the rock.
Then toward the secondary opening.
Thinking.
Rafa notices.
He stops.
Looks at his brother.
He knows that look.

RAFA

Oh, fuck me.
Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

What?

RAFA

You're doing it again.

MATEO

Doing what?
Rafa stares at him.

RAFA

Side Door.
Mateo says nothing.
That's confirmation enough.

RAFA

We just walked the secondary.
Mateo looks toward the opening.

RAFA

It's clear.

MATEO

I know.

RAFA

So what's wrong with it?

MATEO

Nothing.

RAFA

Then why the fuck do we need another
one?

MATEO

Because if something happens, I want
another way out.

Rafa shakes his head.

RAFA

Dad really fucked you up with that
shit.

Mateo looks at him.

The humor leaves his face.

MATEO

Dad would still be alive.

Silence.

That lands.

Rafa knows exactly what Mateo means.

A beat.

RAFA

Yeah.

Mateo looks back toward the mountain.

His eyes move across the slope.

Already thinking.

Rafa follows his gaze.

RAFA

You gonna tell Abram?

MATEO

Nope.

RAFA

Adán?

Mateo looks at him.

Obviously not.

RAFA

Justo?

Mateo starts toward the secondary entrance.

MATEO

I don't feel like hearing four
people tell me why it's a waste of
time.

Rafa follows him.

RAFA

It is a waste of time.

Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

See?

Rafa laughs.

RAFA

Asshole.

They enter.

INT. SECONDARY ESCAPEWAY – LATER

Mateo and Rafa make their way back through the passage.

Ahead—

three headlamps wait in the darkness.

Abram.

Adán.

Justo.

Abram looks at the brothers as they approach.

ABRAM

Everything good?

MATEO

Yeah.

ABRAM

Primary?

MATEO

Good.

ABRAM

Secondary?

MATEO

Good.

Abram spreads his hands.

ABRAM

Anything else?

Mateo glances at Rafa.

Rafa knows.

Tiny beat.

MATEO

Nope.

Rafa suppresses a smile.

Abram doesn't notice.

He turns toward the deeper working.

ABRAM

Then can I finally show you why
we're here?

Mateo switches his lamp toward the darkness ahead.

MATEO

Show me your gold.

Abram smiles.

He leads them deeper.

CUT TO:

INT. WORKING — DEEPER UNDERGROUND — DAY

Abram leads them deeper into the working.

Their headlamps sweep across old cuts in the rock.

Eventually Abram stops.

He shines his light across an old section of worked ground.

ABRAM

There.

Mateo steps closer.

Studies it.

Runs his hand across the exposed rock.

Looks along the old working.

MATEO

Worked out.

ABRAM

That part is.

Abram moves his lamp along the direction the old miners followed.

ABRAM

They followed this.

His light traces the obvious mineralized structure through the old working.

Then Abram moves his lamp away from it.

Toward rock that looks considerably less impressive.

ABRAM

I kept looking at this.

Mateo follows the beam.

A much subtler structure disappears into the surrounding rock.

Mateo gets closer.

Scratches loose a little material.

Examines it beneath his lamp.

Moves several feet.

Checks again.

Backtracks.

Looks at the quartz.

Then the surrounding rock.

Abram waits.

So do the others.

Rafa finally loses patience.

RAFA

Anybody wanna translate this for the
non-geologists?

Mateo keeps examining the rock.

MATEO

No.
Rafa looks at Justo.
Justo shrugs.
Abram watches Mateo.

ABRAM

Well?
Mateo doesn't answer immediately.
Finally—

MATEO

You might have something.
Abram smiles.

ABRAM

I didn't bring you from Texas for
"might."
Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

Then you brought the wrong miner.
Abram laughs.
Mateo goes back to the rock.
Abram shows him another possible section.
Mateo examines it.
No.
They move farther.
Another.
Mateo spends more time there.
Still no.
Then another section.
Mateo stops.
Looks.
Moves away.
Then comes back.
He examines it again.
Touches the rock.
Studies the subtle quartz-bearing structure disappearing
into it.
Mateo places his palm against the face.

MATEO

Here.
Abram joins him.

ABRAM

Why here?
Mateo indicates the structure.

MATEO

Because that's where everybody
stopped looking.

Abram looks at the face.

Then at Mateo.

A smile.

They've got their starting point.

MINING SEQUENCE

The JACKLEG is brought forward.

Justo works with the equipment.

Compressed air comes alive.

The jackleg HAMMERS into rock.

Dust erupts through the beams of their headlamps.

Mateo directs the work.

Adán works beside him.

Abram moves material.

Rafa hauls broken rock and clears the working area.

Justo keeps the equipment operating.

Rock comes down.

They clear it.

Mateo examines what they've exposed.

Nothing.

They continue.

Drill.

Clear.

Inspect.

Nothing.

Again.

Hours pass.

Then—

another day.

Back underground.

The jackleg pounds into the face.

Rafa hauls rock.

Adán clears material.

Abram works.

Justo handles the equipment.

Mateo studies every newly exposed section.

Nothing.

Another round.

More broken rock.

More dust.

More work.

Still nothing worth celebrating.

Rafa looks increasingly unconvinced.

Abram doesn't say it—

but some of his confidence is beginning to disappear too.

Mateo keeps working.
 Fresh rock has been exposed.
 The others begin clearing broken material.
 Mateo's headlamp passes across the face.
 Then stops.
 He moves the beam back.
 Something caught his eye.
 Mateo crouches.
 Gets closer.
 A tiny metallic point inside a fracture in the quartz.
 He carefully scratches around it.
 Another fleck.
 Abram notices Mateo isn't moving.
 He comes over.

ABRAM

What?
 Mateo doesn't answer.
 Abram crouches beside him.
 Mateo angles his lamp.
 Now Abram sees it.
 A tiny flash.
 Then another.
 Abram looks at Mateo.
 Mateo allows himself the smallest smile.

MATEO

There you are.
 Adán comes closer.
 Justo looks over.
 Rafa pushes his way in.

RAFA

What?
 Nobody answers him.
 Rafa crouches.
 Looks where they're looking.

RAFA

Where?
 Mateo points.
 Rafa squints.
 Finally sees the tiny fleck.
 He looks at Mateo.
 Then Abram.
 Then back at the rock.

RAFA

That's it?
 Nobody answers.

RAFA

We drove across fucking Peru for
that?

Mateo reaches down.
Picks up a piece of freshly broken quartz.
Turns it beneath his lamp.
Another tiny metallic flash.
He hands it to Rafa.
Rafa examines it.

MATEO

That's not the gold.
Rafa looks at him.
Mateo points deeper into the face.

MATEO

That's the invitation.
Rafa looks toward the rock.
Then at the tiny piece in his hand.
Abram looks at the face.
His hunch wasn't bullshit.
Mateo looks deeper into the working.
They're on something.
But they haven't found out how much.

CUT TO:

INT. WORKING — DAY

Mateo turns the piece of freshly broken quartz beneath his
lamp.
A tiny metallic flash.
He hands it to Rafa.

MATEO

That's not the gold.
Mateo points deeper into the face.

MATEO

That's the invitation.
The men look toward the rock.
Then—
back to work.
The JACKLEG comes alive.
Steel hammers into stone.
Rock breaks.
Dust fills their headlamp beams.
They clear the face.
Mateo moves in.
His lamp searches the freshly exposed quartz.
Another fleck.

Then another.
Abram sees them.

ABRAM

More?

MATEO

More.
Mateo follows the fractures with his lamp.

MATEO

It's carrying.

ABRAM

How far?
Mateo looks at the face.

MATEO

Only one way to find out.
The jackleg comes back up.

MINING SEQUENCE

DRILL.

BREAK.
CLEAR.
Mateo examines the new face.
More visible gold.
Again.
DRILL.
BREAK.
CLEAR.
Better.
Ore-bearing rock is separated from waste.
Rafa hauls it out.
Adán clears the working.
Abram works beside him.
Justo keeps the equipment running.
Mateo follows the mineralization.
Another round.
More quartz comes down.
Rafa's lamp passes across a freshly exposed section.
Stops.
For once—
Rafa says nothing.
Mateo notices.

MATEO

What?
Rafa points his lamp toward the face.
Several flashes of visible gold catch the light.

RAFA

Holy shit.
Abram comes over.
Adán.
Justo.
All five men stare at the face.
Rafa looks at Mateo.

RAFA

This the invitation?
Mateo studies it.
This time he doesn't need long.

MATEO

No.
A beat.

MATEO

This is the gold.
Gold-bearing rock comes out of the working.
Selected ore is kept separate.
Rock is broken down.
Crushed finer.
The material is processed.
Heavy concentrate collects.
Gold begins to separate.
Not much.
Not yet.
Back underground.
DRILL.
BREAK.
HAUL.
CRUSH.
PROCESS.
A small amount of recovered gold goes into a secure container.
Again.
DRILL.
BREAK.
HAUL.
CRUSH.
PROCESS.
More gold.
The container grows heavier.
The five men keep working.
Day becomes night.
Exhausted men eat.
Dirty hands.
Dirty faces.

Nobody has much energy left for conversation.
 Sleep.
 Morning.
 Back underground.
 The cycle begins again.
 CUT TO BLACK.

SEVEN DAYS LATER

INT. WORKING — DAY
 Everything is faster now.
 The five men move like a crew that's been doing this
 together for much longer than a week.
 Mateo barely needs to direct them.
 Justo works the equipment.
 Adán knows what needs clearing before Mateo asks.
 Abram moves ore.
 Rafa hauls.
 Mateo reads the face.
 DRILL.
 BREAK.
 HAUL.
 CRUSH.
 PROCESS.
 GOLD.
 Again.
 DRILL.
 BREAK.
 HAUL.
 CRUSH.
 PROCESS.
 GOLD.

LATER

For once—
 no jackleg.
 No drilling.
 No hammering.
 The five men gather around what their work has produced.
 Recovered gold sits before them.
 Enough that nobody needs Mateo to explain what they're
 looking at anymore.
 Abram stares at it.
 Quiet.
 Rafa looks at the gold.
 Then at Abram.

RAFA

You crazy son of a bitch.

Abram looks at him.

RAFA

You were right.

Abram looks back at the gold.
A smile slowly breaks through.

ABRAM

Yeah.

A beat.

ABRAM

I fucking was.

Abram looks at Mateo.

ABRAM

"Might," huh?

Mateo smiles.

MATEO

I said you might have something.

Abram gestures toward the gold.

ABRAM

That look like "might" to you?

MATEO

Not anymore.

Abram laughs.

He grabs Justo.

A hard embrace.

A slap on the shoulder.

ABRAM

We fucking did it.

JUSTO

You fucking found it.

Abram shakes his head.

ABRAM

We found it.

Adán joins them.

Rafa.

Mateo.

Five exhausted men.

For this moment—

one crew.

Mateo notices Adán looking at the gold.

Different from the others.

MATEO

What you gonna do with yours?

Adán keeps looking at it.

ADÁN

Take it home.

MATEO

All of it?

Adán looks at him.

ADÁN

That's where it belongs.

Mateo nods.

He understands.

Mateo looks back at the gold.

A tired smile crosses his face.

MATEO

Well... looks like we don't have to
sell the truck, honey.

He shakes his head.

MATEO

Thank God I'm not going home empty-
handed.

Rafa grins.

RAFA

She'd have your ass.

Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

She'd have my head.

RAFA

She'd have both.

Mateo gives him a look.

Rafa looks down at the gold.

Then reaches in.

Runs his fingers through it.

Mateo watches him.

MATEO

What the fuck are you doing?

RAFA

Enjoying my retirement.

Mateo knocks his hand away.

MATEO

You're not Scrooge McDuck.

Rafa immediately slips into his best Launchpad McQuack
impression.

RAFA

That's right. Launchpad McQuack.
Mateo stares at him.

RAFA

Put some respect on the name.
Abram laughs.
Justo looks toward Adán.
Adán looks back.
Neither has any fucking idea what the Americans are talking about.
The laughter continues.
Five men standing over the thing they came all this way to find.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED EXPLORATION DRIFT — DAY
Mateo stands at the mouth of the old drift.
Rafa approaches.
Sees where his brother is looking.

RAFA

No.
Mateo shines his lamp down the abandoned passage.
Rafa follows the beam.

RAFA

This goes nowhere.

MATEO

Right now.
Mateo steps inside.
Studies the walls.
The roof.
The width.
He moves farther into the passage.

MATEO

We're just gonna make it a little wider.
Rafa looks down the length of the drift.
Mateo follows his light toward the distant dead end.

MATEO

Most of the work's already been done here.

RAFA

And the rest?
Mateo looks toward the end of the drift.

MATEO

We don't take it all the way through.
Rafa looks at him.

RAFA

Then it's not a door.
Mateo looks back toward the dead end.

MATEO

Not until we need it.
Rafa shakes his head.
Here they fucking go.

SIDE DOOR DEVELOPMENT — OVER TIME

Ordinary gold mining continues.
At intervals, Mateo and Rafa work inside the abandoned exploration drift.
One of the three jacklegs is occasionally brought in.
They clear debris.
Widen constricted areas.
Improve the floor.
Take limited roof and side clearance where necessary.
Enough for the 4x4s and their small flatbed trailers to eventually pass.
They do not build a new tunnel.
Most of the route was already here.
To anyone else, the brothers appear to be reopening and testing an old barren exploratory working.
On another day—
Justo looks inside.

JUSTO

Anything?
Rafa glances toward Mateo.

RAFA

Nothing yet.
Justo looks into the apparently barren drift.

JUSTO

Waste of time.
He walks away.
Rafa looks at Mateo.
Mateo's familiar I-told-you-so expression begins to appear.

RAFA

Don't fucking say it.
Mateo smiles.
They continue working.
Farther down the old drift—
a final section of intact rock remains between them and

daylight.

From outside, there is still no Side Door.
Not until they need it.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIMARY HAULAGE ADIT / WORKING – DAY

The expedition looks different now.

Two 4x4s sit underground in the vehicle-accessible haulage adit.

A rugged flatbed trailer behind each one.

They arrived loaded with everything five men needed to survive and work out here.

Now they're being loaded for the trip back.

Rafa carries another container toward Abram's trailer.

Adán secures cargo.

Justo sorts through mining equipment.

Abram works beside the open rear of his 4x4.

Mateo stands over the remaining equipment.

He looks at the trailers.

Then at everything still waiting to be loaded.

Too much.

Justo lifts another piece of heavy equipment.

MATEO

Leave it.

Justo looks at him.

ABRAM

The equipment?

Mateo looks toward the cargo already secured on the trailers.

MATEO

We can buy equipment.

Abram considers that.

Looks at what they're taking home.

Hard to argue.

He drops the piece he was preparing to load.

The men begin sorting differently now.

Necessary.

Unnecessary.

Replaceable.

Worth carrying.

Worth leaving behind.

Rafa comes across the jacklegs.

Three of them.

He looks toward Mateo.

Abram notices.

ABRAM

Jacklegs?

Mateo barely gives them a second look.

MATEO

Those come with us.

Rafa starts loading them.

No ceremony.

Just another decision.

Nearby—

high-grade material is packed and secured for transport.

Containers.

Heavy sacks.

Cargo strapped down across the two flatbeds.

Equipment that mattered tremendously when they arrived now sits abandoned deeper inside the working.

Nobody cares.

Inside Abram's 4x4—

the final recovered gold is weighed.

Abram records the amount.

Mateo watches.

The gold is secured.

Placed inside a heavy STEEL LOCKBOX bolted into the vehicle.

The lid closes.

CLUNK.

Abram locks it.

Mateo looks across the haulage adit.

Almost done.

Adán tightens another strap across the cargo.

Mateo approaches.

MATEO

Ready to get home?

Adán pulls the strap tight.

ADÁN

Been ready.

Mateo smiles.

He knows exactly who Adán wants to see.

Rafa climbs onto one of the flatbeds.

Checks the load.

RAFA

This shit better hold.

ABRAM

You tied it.

Rafa looks at him.

RAFA

Exactly why I'm worried.

Abram laughs.

Justo closes the rear of his 4x4 inside the adit.

Adán walks around to the passenger side.

Mateo takes one final look deeper into the working.

The mountain that nearly gave them nothing—
and then gave them more than they expected.

Behind that rock—
somewhere nobody else knows—
the unfinished Side Door waits.

Mateo turns away.

Time to go.

Then—

he stops.

A faint sound.

Far away.

ENGINES.

Rafa hears it too.

Looks toward the road.

Abram straightens.

Adán steps away from the vehicle.

Justo looks toward the sound.

The five men listen.

The engines grow louder.

Mateo walks toward the mouth of the adit.

Beyond it—

DUST rises from the road.

More than one vehicle.

Coming toward them.

Nobody moves for a moment.

Rafa looks at Abram.

RAFA

Expecting somebody?

Abram watches the approaching dust.

ABRAM

No.

The engines continue toward them.

CUT TO:

Then—

vehicles appear beyond the mouth of the adit.

They stop outside.

Doors open.

MEN step out.

Armed.

Police uniforms.

Or close enough.
Mateo watches from inside.
Rafa beside him.
Abram moves toward the entrance.
Adán follows.
Justo stays with them.
The men outside spread naturally around their vehicles.
Nothing overtly hostile.
Not yet.
One of them steps forward.
The apparent authority of the group.
Abram meets him near the entrance.
They begin speaking in Spanish.
Questions.
Abram answers.
The man's eyes move past him.
Into the mine.
The 4x4s.
The trailers.
The cargo.
Another supposed officer moves into view.
Rafa watches him.
Something catches Rafa's eye.
The man's neck.
A BLACK SNAKE.
Its body curves into a sideways figure-eight.
Its mouth consuming its own tail.
The OUROBOROS.
Rafa's expression changes.
His eyes rise.
Beneath the man's eye—
a tiny BLACK SKULL.
Rafa knows that face.
JUSTO'S WORKSHOP.
No flashback.
No explanation.
The man turns.
His eyes find Rafa.
Recognition.
Then—
the faintest smile.
Rafa looks at him.
Looks at Justo.
That's all he needs.
Rafa's hand disappears beneath his jacket.
He draws.
BANG.

JUSTO jerks from the impact.
Drops.

RAFA

Fucking Judas!
Everything detonates.
Tattoo Guy DIVES behind one of the vehicles.
The other supposed cops scatter for cover.
GUNFIRE erupts.

MATEO

MOVE!

Mateo pulls Rafa toward cover inside the adit.
Abram and Adán scramble back.
ROUNDS tear through the portal.
Rock spits from the walls.
Metal PINGS off the vehicles.
Glass breaks.
Mateo returns fire from behind the first 4x4.
Rafa drops beside him and fires toward the entrance.
Adán takes cover behind the second vehicle.
Abram fires from farther forward.
BANG.
BANG.
BANG.
The supposed cops answer from behind their vehicles
outside.
Rounds chew into the rock surrounding the entrance.
Abram leans out—
fires—
then suddenly JERKS.
His hand goes immediately to the previously established
wound area.
He looks down.
Blood.
No announcement.
No panic.
Abram presses his hand against it.
Grimaces.
Raises his weapon again.
Keeps fighting.
Another barrage from outside.
Rock fragments explode from the portal wall.
Then—
CRACK.
Different from the gunfire.
Mateo hears it.
He stops.

Looks upward.
 Dust trickles from the roof near the entrance.
 Another ROUND strikes rock.
 CRACK.
 A larger fracture.
 Small pieces begin falling.
 Mateo stares.
 Understands.

MATEO

GET BACK!
 Rafa looks at him.

MATEO

MOVE! MOVE!
 Mateo grabs Rafa.
 Adán retreats deeper.
 Abram staggers backward, one hand still against his wound.
 The rock above the portal SHIFTS.
 A deep, sickening GROAN moves through the mountain.
 Then—
 THE ENTRANCE COMES DOWN.
 A violent wall of rock, dirt and debris collapses across
 the portal.
 The concussion punches through the adit.
 DUST ENGULFS EVERYTHING.
 Darkness.
 Silence.
 Then—
 coughing.
 A headlamp cuts through the dust.
 Another.
 Mateo rises slowly.
 Rafa beside him.
 Adán appears through the haze.
 Abram leans against one of the 4x4s.
 His hand still pressed against his wound.
 The dust begins to settle.
 Where daylight once filled the entrance—
 ROCK.
 Tons of it.
 The primary portal is gone.
 Behind them remain—
 TWO 4x4s.
 TWO loaded flatbeds.
 THREE jacklegs.
 The gold.
 The cargo.

And four men trapped inside the mountain.
 Nobody outside can be seen.
 Tattoo Guy's fate is unknown.
 Rafa stares at the collapsed entrance.
 Mateo looks deeper into the mine.
 Somewhere back there—
 the known secondary escapeway.
 And somewhere else—
 something only the brothers know exists.
 The Side Door.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIMARY HAULAGE ADIT — DAY
 Dust.
 Thick enough to swallow the beams from their headlamps.
 Mateo gets to his feet.
 Rafa beside him.
 Adán emerges through the haze.
 Abram leans against one of the 4x4s, one hand pressed
 against his wound.
 Behind them—
 the PRIMARY PORTAL is gone.
 Rock and debris fill the entrance.
 No daylight.
 No way back through.
 Abram looks deeper into the mine.

ABRAM

Secondary.
 He starts moving.

MATEO

No.
 Abram stops.

ABRAM

What?

MATEO

Justo knew about it.
 Abram looks toward Justo's body.
 Adán does the same.
 They understand.
 If Justo gave those men the mine—
 he gave them the secondary exit too.
 Rafa looks at Mateo.
 Mateo meets his eyes.
 Abram catches it.

ABRAM

What?

Mateo turns toward the abandoned exploration drift.

MATEO

We got another way out.

Abram looks at him.

ABRAM

Since when?

Rafa starts toward the vehicles.

RAFA

Don't ask.

Mateo points toward the first 4x4.

MATEO

Abram. You take the first one. Adán goes with you.

Then to Rafa.

MATEO

You're with me.

They move.

ENGINES TURN OVER.

Headlights cut through the dust.

The first 4x4 rolls deeper into the mine.

Its loaded flatbed rattles behind it.

Mateo follows in the second.

Rafa beside him.

Another loaded flatbed behind them.

TWO 4x4s.

TWO flatbeds.

Deeper into the mountain.

INT. ABANDONED EXPLORATION DRIFT — CONTINUOUS

The first vehicle turns into the old drift.

Abram slows.

This is the supposedly useless passage Mateo and Rafa kept working on.

Except now—

it's wider.

Abram looks at the walls as he drives.

Fresh cuts in old rock.

Debris cleared.

The floor worked enough for the vehicles.

Barely.

The 4x4 squeezes through.

Rock close on both sides.

The flatbed rattles behind it.

Mateo follows.
 A mirror nearly clips the wall.
 Trailer wheels bounce across the rough floor.
 Rafa looks out his window at the narrow clearance.

RAFA

Jesus Christ.
 They continue.
 Then—
 Abram brakes.
 Ahead of them—
 SOLID ROCK.
 The end of the drift.
 Mateo stops behind him.
 Abram gets out.
 Adán follows.
 Mateo and Rafa climb from the second vehicle.
 Abram stares at the rock face.

ABRAM

Mateo.
 Mateo walks past him.

MATEO

This is it.

ABRAM

This is what?
 Adán looks at the wall.

ADÁN

There's no way out.
 Mateo looks at the prepared face.

MATEO

Not yet.
 Rafa already knows what comes next.
 They move to the flatbeds.
 The THREE JACKLEGS come out.
 Mateo and Rafa position themselves at the prepared section.
 Adán takes the third.
 Abram moves to help.
 Mateo finally gets a good look at him.
 Blood.
 More than Mateo realized.

MATEO

You're hit.
 Abram looks down at his hand.

ABRAM

I'm fine.

MATEO
Get in the truck.

ABRAM
Fuck you.
Mateo looks at him.
No time for this.

MATEO
Then make yourself useful.
Abram does.
The JACKLEGS COME ALIVE.

BRRRRRRRRRRRR—
Three drills hammer the prepared
rock.
Dust explodes into the passage.
Fragments fall.
The noise is deafening.
Mateo works the section he and Rafa already prepared.
Rafa attacks another.
Adán follows their lead.
Abram clears broken material despite the blood spreading
through his clothing.
The jacklegs hammer.
Rock breaks.
More debris comes down.
Then—
A PINPOINT OF LIGHT.
Rafa sees it first.
Stops.
Mateo looks.
DAYLIGHT.
Just a speck.
But it's there.
Rafa looks at his brother.
Mateo gives him nothing.
Back to work.

BRRRRRRRRRRRR—
The jacklegs hammer again.
The hole grows.
Fresh air pushes through.
More rock comes away.
Daylight spreads across their faces.
They keep working.
Until finally—
the opening is large enough.
Mateo climbs through.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE – CONTINUOUS

Mateo emerges onto the exterior slope.

Looks around.

Nothing.

No vehicles.

No men.

No movement.

Clear.

Mateo turns back toward the opening.

MATEO

Abram!

INT. SIDE DOOR – CONTINUOUS

The men move quickly.

The THREE JACKLEGS are loaded back onto the flatbeds.

Straps tightened.

Nothing left behind.

Abram gets behind the wheel of the first 4x4.

Adán climbs in beside him.

Mateo and Rafa move toward the second.

MATEO

You first.

Abram starts forward.

EXT. SIDE DOOR / MOUNTAINSIDE – CONTINUOUS

The first 4x4 noses through the opening.

Tight.

Metal SCRAPES rock.

Abram keeps it steady.

The truck clears.

Then the flatbed.

One side catches briefly.

Adán looks back.

Abram eases forward.

The trailer SCRAPES—
shifts—

and comes free.

The first rig is out.

INT. SECOND 4x4 – CONTINUOUS

Mateo grips the wheel.

Rafa beside him.

RAFA

Your fucking Side Door.

Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

You wanna walk?

Rafa looks forward.

RAFA

Drive.

Mateo does.

EXT. SIDE DOOR / MOUNTAINSIDE – CONTINUOUS

The second 4x4 pushes through.

Rock close against both sides.

Then—

DAYLIGHT.

The truck clears.

Its flatbed follows.

SCRAPE.

RATTLE.

CLEAR.

Both rigs are outside.

TWO 4x4s.

TWO flatbeds.

THREE jacklegs.

THE GOLD.

THE CARGO.

All of it.

Abram pulls alongside Mateo.

For one brief moment—

the four men sit there.

Alive.

Abram looks back toward the opening in the mountainside.

Then at Mateo.

ABRAM

Side Door?

Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

Side Door.

Rafa shakes his head.

RAFA

Don't encourage him.

Mateo almost smiles.

Then he sees Abram's hand.

The blood.

The smile disappears.

MATEO

We gotta move.

Abram nods.

ENGINES REV.

The two 4x4s pull away.

Both flatbeds behind them.

The Side Door disappears into the mountainside behind them.

CUT TO:

EXT. ADÁN'S HOUSE — DAY

Two 4x4s come hard up the road.

Two flatbeds behind them.

Dust rolls across the property as they stop.

The doors open.

ADÁN gets out.

The house door opens.

MARISA appears.

Then LILIANA.

For the first time since the mine—

Adán breaks.

He crosses the distance quickly.

Marisa meets him.

They embrace.

Liliana runs to her father.

Adán drops down and pulls her against him.

Alive.

All three of them.

Mateo watches from beside the second 4x4.

Rafa stands nearby.

Abram climbs out more slowly.

One hand remains close to his wound.

Nobody has properly dealt with it.

Not yet.

Mateo and Rafa move to the cargo.

They bring out ADÁN'S SHARE OF THE GOLD.

Adán sees it.

ADÁN

Mateo—

MATEO

It's yours.

Adán looks at him.

Nothing more needs saying.

They leave the gold with him.

Nearby, Rafa removes his small rucksack.

He sets it beside a large WATER CONTAINER.

He unscrews his canteen and begins filling it.

As he works—

the rucksack shifts.

Slides partially behind the container.

Almost completely out of sight.
Rafa finishes.
Caps the canteen.
Across the property—
Abram looks at his 4x4.
Then at the blood on his hand.

ABRAM

Leave mine here.
Mateo looks over.

ABRAM

I'll come back for it.
Mateo looks at Abram.
Then at the first 4x4 and flatbed.

MATEO

You sure?

ABRAM

I'm not driving it like this.
Mateo nods.
Decision made.
Abram's 4x4 stays.
Its flatbed stays.
The mining equipment stays.
ALL THREE JACKLEGS stay.
Mateo calls toward Rafa.

MATEO

Let's go.
Rafa grabs his canteen.
Not the bag.
He walks away.
The little rucksack remains hidden behind the water container.
Mateo says goodbye to Adán.
A quick embrace.
Rafa follows.
No speeches.
No ominous farewell.
Nobody knows this is goodbye.
Abram climbs into Mateo's 4x4.
Rafa gets in.
Mateo behind the wheel.
One 4x4.
One flatbed.
The engine turns over.
Adán stands with Marisa and Liliana as the vehicle pulls away.

The family watches them disappear down the road.
 Dust settles.
 Quiet returns.

EXT. ADÁN'S HOUSE — LATER
 An ENGINE approaches.
 Adán looks toward the road.
 A vehicle appears.
 Then another.
 The same false appearance of authority.
 Police.
 Adán's expression changes.
 The vehicles stop.
 Doors open.
 The HENCHMEN get out.
 Then—
 TATTOO GUY.
 Dirty false police uniform.
 The OUROBOROS visible on his neck.
 The small SKULL beneath his eye.
 A pistol sits plainly in its holster.
 Unused.
 Across Tattoo Guy's shoulder—
 A MACHETE.
 Held loosely by the handle.
 Casual.
 Like a baseball bat.
 Tattoo Guy walks toward the house.
 Adán moves to the doorway.

ADÁN

Get out.

Tattoo Guy keeps coming.

ADÁN

Get the fuck out of here!

Marisa appears behind Adán.
 Tattoo Guy reaches the doorway.
 We do not follow him inside.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD — DAY
 Mateo drives.
 Rafa sits beside him.
 Abram rides behind them.
 The flatbed rattles along.
 Abram leans back.
 Quiet.

His face beginning to lose some color.
Rafa reaches for his rucksack.
Nothing.
He checks beside him.
Behind the seat.
Again.

RAFA
Fuck.

MATEO
What?

RAFA
My bag.

MATEO
What about it?

RAFA
Left it at Adán's.
Mateo looks at him.

MATEO
You'd forget your head if it wasn't
screwed on.
Rafa searches again anyway.

RAFA
My passport's in it.
Mateo stares ahead.
A beat.

MATEO
Goddammit, Rafa.
Mateo slows.
Turns the 4x4 around.

EXT. ROAD NEAR ADÁN'S HOUSE — LATER
Mateo rounds a distant bend.
Then—
slows.
Ahead.
Vehicles.
Police vehicles.
The same kind they just escaped.
Mateo stops.
Rafa sees them.
Whatever irritation existed over the forgotten bag—
gone.
Mateo backs away before they can be seen.
He pulls the 4x4 and flatbed off the road.

Into concealment.
Engine off.
Silence.
Abram shifts in the back.

MATEO

Stay here.
Abram looks at him.
He doesn't argue.
Mateo and Rafa draw their weapons.
They move on foot.

EXT. ADÁN'S PROPERTY – CONTINUOUS
Mateo and Rafa approach carefully.

Low.
Quiet.
They find a position with a partial view of the house and the vehicles.
Nothing moves.
No voices.
No screaming.
Mateo watches the house.
Then—
THUNK.
He freezes.
Rafa looks toward the house.
Silence.
THUNK.
A heavy impact from somewhere inside.
Mateo's jaw tightens.
Another pause.
THUNK.
Mateo starts forward.
Rafa catches him.
Mateo tries to pull away.
Rafa yanks him backward into concealment.
Mateo turns on him—
furious.
Rafa clamps one hand over Mateo's mouth.
His pistol remains ready in the other.
Mateo struggles.
Rafa holds him.
Hard.
Mateo's eyes burn into his brother.
Rafa looks directly back at him.
No words.
They don't know how many men are inside.
They don't know what's behind that door.

They don't know what they're walking into.
THUNK.
Mateo closes his eyes.
Rafa keeps hold of him.
Then—
nothing.
Silence.
Long enough to become unbearable.
The front door opens.
Rafa tightens his grip.
A HENCHMAN comes out.
Carrying gold.
Another follows.
More of ADÁN'S SHARE.
They move toward the vehicles.
Another man exits.
Then—
TATTOO GUY.
Last.
His pistol is still in its holster.
The machete hangs loosely at his side now.
No theatrical gesture.
No smile.
He simply walks toward the vehicles.
Mateo stares at him.
Rafa does not release his brother.
The gold is loaded.
Doors shut.
Engines start.
The vehicles pull away.
Mateo watches them disappear.
Rafa waits.
A few more seconds.
Listening.
Nothing.
Only then—
Rafa releases him.
Mateo is already moving.

EXT. / INT. ADÁN'S HOUSE — CONTINUOUS
Mateo reaches the house.
Rafa behind him.
Mateo enters.
Rafa follows.
THE CAMERA REMAINS OUTSIDE.
We do not enter.
We do not see what they see.

Time passes.
 Silence.
 Then Mateo emerges.
 He stops outside.
 His face has changed.
 Shock.
 Disgust.
 Horror.
 He looks physically sick.
 Rafa emerges behind him.
 No better.
 Neither speaks.
 Mateo turns back toward the doorway.
 For an instant—
 it looks like he might go inside again.
 Rafa catches his arm.
 Mateo stops.
 Whatever is in that house—
 there is nothing left for them to do.
 Rafa looks away.
 Then his eyes fall toward the water container.
 He remembers.
 The bag.
 He walks over.
 Reaches behind it.
 Pulls out the small rucksack.
 Exactly where he left it.
 Untouched.
 Rafa opens it.
 His passport is still there.
 He closes the bag.
 There is no relief in his face.
 None.
 Mateo looks toward the road.

MATEO

Come on.
 They leave.

EXT. CONCEALED 4x4 — MOMENTS LATER
 Abram sees them approaching.
 He takes one look at their faces.

ABRAM

Adán?
 Neither answers.
 Abram understands enough.
 Mateo reaches the vehicle.

Then notices Abram.
Really notices him.
The blood.
Abram tries to straighten.
His legs nearly give.
Mateo catches him.

MATEO

Abram.
Rafa comes around.
Abram's condition is worsening fast.
Rafa looks at the wound.

RAFA

Shit.
Mateo gets Abram into the vehicle.
Rafa climbs in.
Mateo takes the wheel.
The engine starts.
They pull away.
One 4x4.
One flatbed.
Three men.
And no time left to waste.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD — LATE DAY
The 4x4 tears down the road.
Flatbed bouncing behind it.

INT. 4x4 — CONTINUOUS
Mateo drives hard.
Rafa keeps looking back.
Abram is slumped against the rear seat.
One hand pressed against his wound.
Blood has soaked through.
His face is pale now.
Sweat across his forehead.

RAFA

Abram.
No response.
Rafa reaches back.
Touches him.

RAFA

Abram.
Abram stirs.
Barely.

MATEO

How is he?
Rafa looks at the blood.

RAFA

Not good.
Mateo pushes harder.

EXT. SMALL TOWN – EVENING

The 4x4 comes fast into town.
Mateo searches the buildings as he drives.
Rafa does the same.
Nothing.
Another street.
Another turn.
Abram groans in the back.

MATEO

Come on...
Rafa looks ahead.
Then sees it.
A CROOKED CROSS.
Mounted outside a modest clinic.
And nearby–
the familiar LIZARD sign / decoration marking the hotel.

RAFA

There.
Mateo sees it.
He turns hard.

EXT. MARICELA'S CLINIC – CONTINUOUS

The 4x4 stops abruptly.
Mateo is out before the engine dies.
Rafa gets Abram's door open.
MATEO pounds on the clinic door.

MATEO

Maricela!
Nothing.
He pounds harder.

MATEO

MARICELA!
Rafa struggles to keep Abram upright.

RAFA

Mateo!
Mateo pounds with both fists.

MATEO

OPEN THE DOOR!

A light comes on inside.

Movement.

Locks.

The door opens.

MARICELA appears.

She sees Mateo.

Then Rafa.

Then Abram.

Everything changes.

MARICELA

What happened?

MATEO

Help us.

Maricela moves immediately.

MARICELA

Bring him in.

INT. MARICELA'S CLINIC — CONTINUOUS

They carry Abram inside.

Maricela clears the examination table.

MATEO and RAFA get Abram onto it.

Maricela goes to work.

No hesitation.

She cuts away blood-soaked clothing.

Finds the wound.

Her expression tightens.

MARICELA

How long?

MATEO

Since the mine.

Maricela looks at him.

MARICELA

Since the mine?

She presses against the wound.

Abram groans.

MARICELA

Hold him.

Mateo does.

Rafa grabs supplies as Maricela points them out.

MARICELA

There. Give me that.

Rafa hands it over.

Maricela works.
Pressure.
Cleaning.
Assessing.
Abram's breathing is shallow.

MARICELA

Abram.
Abram opens his eyes slightly.

MARICELA

Stay with me.
She continues.
Mateo stands opposite her.
Blood on his hands.
Maricela looks at him.

MARICELA

Where's Adán?
Mateo doesn't answer.
Maricela continues working.

MARICELA

Mateo.
Nothing.
Her hands slow.
She looks up.

MARICELA

Where's my sister?
Mateo looks at her.
He tries.

MATEO

Maricela...
She sees his face.

MARICELA

Marisa?
Mateo says nothing.
Maricela stares at him.
Then—

MARICELA

Liliana?
Mateo lowers his eyes.
That's the answer.
Maricela stops.
Her hands remain against Abram.
But she isn't moving.
For one terrible moment—
she's somewhere else.

Her breathing changes.
Her eyes fill.
RAFA looks away.
Mateo can barely look at her.
Abram suddenly GROANS.
Maricela's eyes snap back to him.
The clinician takes over again.
She presses harder against the wound.

MARICELA

Stay with me, Abram.
Her voice is different now.
Breaking underneath.
But her hands are steady.
She works.
Mateo watches her.
Nothing he can say will help.

LATER

Abram lies stabilized on the table.
Still pale.
Still weak.
But breathing.
Maricela sits beside him.
For the first time since Mateo told her—
she has stopped moving.
Her eyes are red.
Mateo and Rafa stand nearby.
Silence.
Mateo finally walks outside.

EXT. MARICELA'S CLINIC — CONTINUOUS

Mateo goes to the flatbed.
Rafa follows.
They look at what remains of the gold.
No discussion of percentages.
No argument.
Mateo begins separating a portion.
Rafa understands immediately.
He helps.
They prepare TWO shares.

INT. MARICELA'S CLINIC — MOMENTS LATER

Mateo carries the first share inside.
Sets it down near Maricela.
She looks at it.

MARICELA

What's this?

MATEO

Adán's.
Maricela looks at him.

MARICELA

They took Adán's.

MATEO

Then this one's his.
Maricela stares at the gold.
Her composure nearly goes again.
Mateo doesn't make her respond.
Rafa brings in the second share.
He places it near Abram.

MATEO

This stays with him.
Maricela looks from the gold—
to Abram—
to the brothers.

MARICELA

You can't stay here.
Mateo looks at her.

MARICELA

If they knew where Adán lived,
they'll keep looking.

RAFA

What about you?
Maricela looks at Abram.

MARICELA

I know a place.

MATEO

Where?

MARICELA

Somewhere they won't find us.
Mateo looks at Abram.
He doesn't like this.

MATEO

I'm not leaving him.

MARICELA

You have to.
Mateo looks at her.

MARICELA

I can move him when he's stable.
She looks toward the door.

MARICELA

I know where to take him.
Mateo remains beside Abram.
Abram's eyes open.
Barely.
He sees Mateo.

ABRAM

Mateo.
Mateo leans closer.

MATEO

I'm here.
Abram gathers enough strength.

ABRAM

Go.
Mateo shakes his head.

ABRAM

Go home.
Mateo looks at him.
Abram's eyes close again.
Maricela puts a hand on Mateo's arm.

MARICELA

I'll take care of him.
Mateo looks at her.
This woman has just learned that her sister—
her brother-in-law—
and her niece—
are gone.
And she's still standing over Abram.
Still trying to save him.
Mateo nods.
He grips Abram's hand.
Then lets go.
Rafa steps forward.
A quiet acknowledgment between him and Abram.
No joke this time.
Mateo moves toward the door.
Stops.
Looks back at Maricela.

MATEO

I'm sorry.
Maricela cannot answer.
Mateo doesn't make her.
He leaves.
Rafa follows.

EXT. MARICELA'S CLINIC — NIGHT

The brothers stand beside the 4x4.
 For the first time since this began—
 there are only two of them.
 Mateo looks back toward the clinic.
 Through the window—
 Maricela is already moving around Abram again.
 Doing what has to be done.
 Mateo gets behind the wheel.
 Rafa climbs in beside him.
 The engine starts.
 They pull away.
 The clinic disappears behind them.
 Two brothers.
 One 4x4.
 One flatbed.
 Whatever gold remains.
 And the road home.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD — NIGHT

The 4x4 moves through darkness.
 One flatbed behind it.
 Mateo drives.
 Rafa sits beside him.
 No Adán.
 No Abram.
 No Justo.
 Just the brothers.
 Neither has much left to say.
 Rafa looks back.
 Secured among what remains of their cargo—
 compact reinforced cases.
 Small.
 Dense.
 Impossibly heavy.
 Their share of what remains.
 Mateo watches the road.

MATEO

How far to the airport?

Rafa doesn't answer.

Mateo glances over.

MATEO

Rafa.

RAFA

We're not going to the airport.

Mateo looks at him.

MATEO

What?

Rafa gestures behind them.

RAFA

You planning on carrying that
through security?

Mateo checks the mirror.

The cases.

He hadn't thought that far ahead.

MATEO

So what do you suggest?

Rafa reaches for his phone.

RAFA

I know somebody.

Mateo looks over.

MATEO

Here?

RAFA

No.

Rafa finds a number.

RAFA

But he knows somebody here.

Mateo looks back at the road.

MATEO

Of course he does.

Rafa makes the call.

EXT. PERUVIAN ROADS — NIGHT

The 4x4 keeps moving.

Rafa on the phone.

One call becomes another.

A name.

A number.

Another call.

Mateo drives.

Rafa scribbles something down.

Ends the call.

Silence.

MATEO

Well?

RAFA

We gotta get to the coast.

MATEO

Why?

Rafa looks at him.

RAFA

Because we're not flying out.

Mateo stares at the road ahead.

Then changes course.

EXT. COASTAL PORT DISTRICT – PRE-DAWN

Industrial lights glow against the darkness.

Warehouses.

Freight containers.

Cranes.

Trucks.

Beyond them—

ships.

The battered 4x4 and flatbed roll into the port district.

Rafa directs Mateo.

RAFA

Keep going.

Another turn.

RAFA

There.

An unremarkable warehouse.

A MAN waits outside.

Mateo pulls in.

EXT. PORT WAREHOUSE – CONTINUOUS

Rafa gets out.

Mateo follows.

The man studies them.

Then the battered vehicle.

Then the flatbed.

PORT CONTACT

You Rafa?

RAFA

Depends who's asking.

The man looks at him for a moment.

Almost smiles.

PORT CONTACT

Then you're Rafa.

Mateo looks at his brother.

INT. PORT WAREHOUSE – LATER

One reinforced case sits on a heavy table.

The Port Contact reaches for it.
Tries to pull it toward himself.
It barely moves.
He looks at the brothers.

PORT CONTACT

What the hell is in this?
Mateo says nothing.
Rafa opens the case.
GOLD.
The man's expression changes.
He looks inside.
Then at Rafa.
Then Mateo.
Rafa closes it.

PORT CONTACT

This changes things.

MATEO

Can you get us out?
The man considers them.

PORT CONTACT

Yes.
Mateo waits.

MATEO

How much?
The man tells them.
We don't hear the number.
We don't need to.
Mateo's face says enough.

MATEO

That's robbery.

RAFA

No.
Mateo looks at him.

RAFA

Robbery's what happened back there.
Rafa looks toward the case.

RAFA

This is business.
Mateo doesn't like it.
But he knows.

MATEO

Do it.
The Port Contact nods.

EXT. PORT — DAWN

The first light of morning.

Cargo moves.

Forklifts.

Containers.

Dockworkers.

Mateo and Rafa wait away from the activity.

Their cases are no longer sitting openly on the flatbed.

Whatever arrangements had to be made—

have been made.

Mateo watches the port.

MATEO

How the hell do you know these
people?

RAFA

I don't.

Mateo looks at him.

RAFA

I know people who know people.

Mateo shakes his head.

MATEO

El Resbaloso.

Rafa gives him the smallest smile.

RAFA

Told you.

A distant SHIP HORN.

Both brothers look toward the water.

EXT. PORT — MORNING

A working cargo vessel waits beyond the dock.

Across her hull:

ESPERANZA

Mateo and Rafa approach.

No celebration.

No triumph.

Just exhaustion.

They board.

As Mateo passes along the vessel—

something catches his eye.

A small inscription worked into the ship.

AUT VIAM INVENIAM AUT FACIAM.

Mateo looks at it.

Just for a moment.

Then keeps walking.

He says nothing.

EXT. ESPERANZA – LATER

Lines released.

The ship begins moving away from the port.

Water opens between the vessel and Peru.

EXT. ESPERANZA – RAIL – DAY

Mateo and Rafa stand side by side at the rail.

Wind off the Pacific.

Neither speaks.

They look back toward the shrinking coastline.

Somewhere behind them—

the mountain.

The mine.

The Side Door.

Justo.

Adán.

Marisa.

Liliana.

Abram.

Maricela.

And everything they left behind.

Rafa finally turns away from the coast.

Mateo doesn't.

Not yet.

Then Mateo turns too.

The brothers look out across open water.

Ahead of them—

home.

WIDE:

ESPERANZA moves across the Pacific.

The name visible against the hull.

And somewhere aboard her—

AUT VIAM INVENIAM AUT FACIAM.

At the rail, Mateo looks at Rafa.

Then puts an arm around his brother.

Rafa stays beside him.

No speech.

Only open water ahead.

FADE OUT.

END TITLES.

"NINACHAY" begins.

THE END.