

PESCADO MUERTO

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Draft 7  
November 15, 2012  
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1 EXT. ROCKY BEACH - MORNING 1

A BAIT-BUCKET full of SARDINES sits on the ground. A hand wearing a WEDDING RING dangles loosely in the background.

SUPER OVER IMAGE: Pescado Muerto

A man sits on a low rock with arms around his knees and head slouched forward. This is ULISES, 34 years old. He wears WORN FISHERMAN CLOTHING, DIRTY BOOTS and is surrounded by an ARRAY OF FISHING GEAR. A BELL tied to the end of a fishing rod points to the sea.

The bell rings twice, ever so slightly, jolted by a faint tug on the rods fishing line.

Ulises perks up with the sound. He grabs his NET stands in anticipation of the bell's next ring. It doesn't.

Ulises tosses his net to the side and turns his back on the bell as he moves to sit again.

The bell rings again faintly. Ulises spins around quickly. He is stopped cold in his tracks as he sees an OCEAN SIREN standing and staring at him between him and his rod. She is dressed in a FLOWING WHITE OPAQUE DRESS and SHAWL. Her hair flows, golden like the color of sand.

The Ocean Siren approaches Ulises and circles him. As she circles she grabs his left hand and holds it between them. Her smooth skin contrasts with Ulises's dirty hands of a worker. The Siren stares deeply into Ulises eyes, then leans and whispers seductively in his ear.

OCEAN SIREN

With the right bait you could have  
all the fish in the world.

Ulises looks at his hand being held by the Siren. Her fingertips focus on his wedding band, then trail away from grasping his ring.

1A EXT. RUN DOWN APARTMENT HOUSE - DAY 1A

Ulises trudges with his bait pail into the old house. His bell jingles with his step.

2 INT. OLD SHACK - DAY 2

Ulises sets down his full sardine pail and fishing gear. He looks through a few CABINETS and CRATES in his small and humble single room home.

There is a BED and TABLE but not much else. A VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE STATUE sits with A CANDLE burning in front of it. Ulises picks through a few pathetic EARS OF DRIED CORN but tosses them aside.

He reaches deep into the back of a bottom cupboard and pulls out a SMALL LIQUOR BOTTLE. He takes a drink and looks out the window. He sees his neighbor, OSWALD, 65, departing with fishing gear.

ULISES  
(through the window)  
Oswald!

OSWALD  
Ulises! Que pasa amigo?

ULISES  
Nada compa. You slept in, the fish went to bed already!

OSWALD  
You're one to talk. Catch anything?

Ulises hesitates for a moment.

ULISES  
I might see you out there later.

Ulises waves as Oswald walks away. Ulises starts to take another drink from his flask but then--

MILA  
Quehuvo!

Two delicate hands cover Ulises's eyes. This is his wife, MILA, 28. She is neat and cute but dressed plainly. Mila hugs Ulises from behind. Her hand with her WEDDING RING moves to Ulises's flask. Ulises turns, also keeping his hands on the flask. Mila notices something.

MILA (CONT'D)  
Where's your ring?

Ulises lets go of the bottle and reaches into his back pocket and shows his wife his wedding band. He puts it on.

Mila sees the empty fish chain.

MILA (CONT'D)  
Dinner's going to be tough.

Ulises hesitantly pushes forward the pail of sardines. They both look for a moment.

Mila takes a deep breath and turns to Ulises. She puts her arms around him. Ulises returns her affection.

MILA (CONT'D)

Ulises, I'm going to ask Oswald for fish.

Ulises rolls his eyes and shakes his head as if he's heard this before. He drops his arms from around Mila.

ULISES

I'll catch something. I promise.

Mila kisses Ulises on the neck. His face becomes serious, his eyes focused somewhere else.

4A EXT. OCEAN - ULISES'S IMAGINATION 4A

Loud ocean breakers crash. We see a mirrored image similar to the last but with the woman from the pier kissing Ulises's neck instead of Mila.

4 INT. OLD SHACK - DAY 4

Ulises's face is blank.

ULISES

I'm going back out.

MILA

Okay.

ULISES

I'll be home for dinner.

5 EXT. ROCKY BEACH - DAY 5

Ulises stands alone, staring at the ocean. He looks down both sides of the beach and then fidgets with his wedding band. He hesitates but then slips off his ring, tying it to the line and casting it out to sea.

6 EXT. ROCKY BEACH - LATER 6

Ulises stands smoking. He admires his fish chain which is now lined with fish.

He snaps out of his gaze and notices a hook on his chain that is empty.

Ulises picks up his rod and reel, stringing along the wedding band tied to the end. He casts out and sets his rod down between TWO ROCKS. He begins to light a cigarette.

Out of the corner of his eyes Ulises sees the Siren in the distance staring in his direction.

He hesitates but then calls to her.

ULISES

Hey!

His fishing bell jingles quickly but strongly.

Ulises's looks to the rod and then turns back to the Ocean Siren but she has disappeared.

He scans the coast with his eyes. His bell rings again and he turns to it. He is astonished to see the Ocean Siren walking from the water in front of him. She touches the bell on the end of his rod and it rings as she passes.

She stands in front of Ulises. He tries to speak but cannot. The Siren caresses his face and seductively and smiles.

She grabs his hand.

Ulises cannot hold back. He suddenly throws himself on the Siren, kissing her intensely on the lips. Ulises's bell rings again, this time LOUDLY and VIOLENTLY. Ulises's eyes widen and focus on his rod, straining to see around the Siren.

Line quickly spins off the rod spool, dragged by a large fish. Ulises breaks his kiss and runs to the rod. He reels. The Siren turns and looks down the coast. Her eyes have become the COLD PIERCING EYES of a fish.

Ulises battles the fish at the end of his line. His reel grinds with the stress. Suddenly the line snaps and everything is still. He takes a moment then reels in and sees that the end of his line has snapped and is frayed. The ring is gone. Ulises is alone on the beach.

Ulises is stunned.

7 EXT. UNDER THE ROCK CLIFFS - THE NEXT MORNING

7

Ulises lays underneath the pier curled in the fetal position. He is shivering and awakens with a start. Oswald is standing a few feet away. There are tears in his eyes.

OSWALD

Ulises.

Ulises immediately looks at his hand but his ring is still gone. He scrambles to his feet and starts to reel in his line.

OSWALD (CONT'D)  
You should come home.

Ulises's fish chain dangles in the water. There is only one small fish attached to it now.

8 INT. OLD SHACK - DAY

8

Ulises and Oswald enter the room. Ulises is shocked to see Mila in bed, eyes closed and covered with a blanket. On the table is last night's dinner, the CARCASS OF A LARGE FISH that is only bones now.

OSWALD  
She had no food and you didn't come home.

Ulises moves quickly to his wife and grabs her hand.

OSWALD (CONT'D)  
So I gave her a fish I caught in the cove.

Ulises looks at Oswald and then hugs his wife.

OSWALD (CONT'D)  
It was clean and fresh. And beautiful and blue. But she choked.

Ulises starts to tear up. He squeezes Mila's wedding ring hand and then kisses her hard on the lips. He pulls back quickly, staring strangely. He feels his own lips with his fingers and then hers. From her lips he pulls his wedding ring.

Mila's hand falls from Ulises grasp.