

VICENTE

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EXT. HILL - DAY

A small Mexican farm hacienda sits on the edge of an agave planted plateau.

VICENTE, late 30's, looks down on the hacienda from his horse.

He breathes in deeply the vast canyon below and rides toward the house.

A six-shooter sits large in the holster on his side and a knife hides most of his other thigh. The sun has burned lines in his face. He understands everything he sees.

EXT. HACIENDA COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Vicente ties his horse and walks toward the doorway of the interior adobe courtyard.

The courtyard is still.

Vicente scans around the doorway until his eyes stop on two young boys, ANTONIO, 9, MARCOS, 6. They play on the dusty courtyard ground behind a pile of drying corn.

A RED BIRD flies around inside a small cage that hangs on the wall of the house.

Vicente watches for a moment then calls:

VICENTE  
Young men! Is your father home?

Antonio, older of the two, stands quickly but doesn't respond.

There's a moment of heavy air.

Antonio's eyes are focused on the gate. Vicente notices.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
You left the gate open but don't worry boy, you're not in trouble. Where can your father be found?

Antonio is still silent and does not speak.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
You can't be the only men here. Where's your father?

ANTONIO  
Cutting posts.

VICENTE  
Cutting posts. And your mother?

ANTONIO  
Cutting posts.

VICENTE  
Cutting posts? Your mother does  
that?

Both boys nod.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
I thought those women were all  
folktale.

The boys are silent.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
Do you have clean water?

INT. KITCHEN - CUT TO:

Antonio pours water from a heavy clay pitcher into a clay mug. Some spills but not much. Antonio carefully wipes away what has spilled.

He walks to Vicente and hands him the mug.

VICENTE  
They leave you here all by  
yourself?

Antonio nods. Vicente takes a long drink of water.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
It's sweet.

He smiles and takes another draught. He looks at Marcos.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
(to Marcos)  
He left you here and didn't tell  
you what time he would return?

ANTONIO  
We don't have a watch.

Vicente is somewhat perplexed.

VICENTE  
You don't have a watch?

ANTONIO  
No.

VICENTE  
And he didn't teach you how to tell  
time?

ANTONIO  
Yes.

VICENTE  
Yes, he taught you how to tell  
time?

ANTONIO  
Yes.

VICENTE  
But you have no watch and you have  
no clock.

ANTONIO  
(chin toward Marcos)  
He tells time.

VICENTE  
He has a watch?

ANTONIO  
No.

VICENTE  
Then how does he tell the time?

ANTONIO  
He remembers.

Vicente is about to take another drink of water, but stops.

VICENTE  
He's one of those then too.

Vicente takes the sip of water and sets the mug on the table.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
(toward Marcos)  
Well, what time will your father be  
home then?

ANTONIO  
Soon. Do you want more?

VICENTE

No. No.

Vicente straightens his shirt and admires the boys.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

You are good boys. Like gentlemen.  
I admire good men like you.

Vicente comes closer and sits at the table.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

My father was like you boys. And  
my mother, she was folktale people  
also. But she bore her burden alone  
and inside. Because she wanted to  
save it for revenge, to punish my  
father for allowing himself to be  
killed.

Antonio and Marcos stare blinking at Vicente.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

Does your father own a pistol?

ANTONIO

Yes.

VICENTE

May I look at the pistol?

Antonio stares at Vicente but doesn't move.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

I'm old enough to give you  
permission to take it out. Besides  
you're the man of the house now,  
right!?

Antonio takes off his shoes and uses a chair to climb onto  
the table. He grabs an old revolver from a high shelf.

He climbs off the table and hands it to Vicente. Vicente  
looks at the gun, turning it over to look at the base of the  
butt.

He seems to not see what he was looking for.

His intense gaze turns to a smile.

He respectfully places the gun on the table, then holds out  
his hand for Antonio to shake.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

Thank you for the water boys.

Antonio, then Marcos shake the large hand.

Antonio watches Vicente pass through the door and walk toward his horse.

Antonio bolts away suddenly.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Antonio rummages through a large trunk and dives to the bottom to pull out a colorful cloth bundle. He hurries after Vicente.

ANTONIO

Wait!

EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Antonio stands in the door with the bundle. Vicente sees the bundle, then walks towards him.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Vicente unwraps many layers of cloth to reveal a revolver much older than the first.

He turns it over, appreciating every detail. He looks at the base of the butt.

Initials M.A.Z. are stenciled in the bottom.

The sight affects Vicente but he keeps it to himself.

Vicente approaches the boys and kneels down. He cradles gun in his lap close to boys.

VICENTE

Has your father told you about this gun?

ANTONIO

He doesn't know we know.

VICENTE

This is an American pistol. .44 caliber Colt revolver. It's the second model. It's very old now.

(MORE)

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
But it's beautiful. You think it's  
beautiful?

He looks to see the boys reaction. They are fixed.

Vicente turns the gun over to show the initials to Antonio.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
These are a man's initials. A man's  
initials are his name. A man's name  
is passed down from father to  
father to father.

He looks to the boys.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
What's your father's name?

The boys stare perplexed.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
You don't know your fathers name?

Vicente shakes his head.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
The man to whom these initials  
belonged, he was an American  
soldier, and he was killed in  
battle, by another man, my  
grandfather.

The sound of a burro's neck bell approaching becomes apparent  
outside, growing in distance. It perks the boys up. Vicente  
notices.

Vicente grabs Antonio and places the pistol butt firmly in  
his hand. He places the boy's other hand on the gun and wraps  
both hands tightly around the butt.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
After the war with the United  
States, a long time ago now, there  
were soldiers still fighting, on  
both sides, even after the war  
ended. Americans and Mexicans. The  
news that the war was over never  
reached them, so they continued to  
fight, to kill each other... for I  
don't know what: for ignorance, for  
irony. Or because that's just how  
it was then.

Both boys are motionless.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

A killing in a battle is an honorable thing, but my grandfather still hated the thought that he had ended a mans life, so to remember the pain, he took the man's gun from his dead hands. And now that man's gun is in your hands.

(clasps Antonio's hands)

Firmly, like that.

Vicente pushes the boy's foot outward so his stance is wider.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

Your chin up.

Antonio raises his chin.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

My grandfather gave that gun to my father many years ago, with an understanding of the weight of respect for taking a life. But my father never gave that gun to me. And because of that I never learned certain things about the right way to live.

Vicente brushes off Antonios shoulder.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

My father was shot in the back. That's why this gun wasn't passed down to me. And that's why I've been looking for this gun and the man holding it for many years now.

Vicente straightens Antonio's gun so that it points at Vicente's head.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

Honor is in the eyes.

Vicente points at his eyes

VICENTE (CONT'D)

See?

Vicente takes his hands away and Antonio is left pointing the gun at Vicente's head. Antonio holds his gaze on Vicente's eyes.

The sound of the burro's bell is closer now.



Vicente stands.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
Put it down for now.

Vicente walks to the door. He leans against the jamb and stares out over the valley, listening to the bell get closer. He turns to see that Antonio is still pointing the gun at him. Vicente smiles and walks back towards him.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
I have one more favor to ask of  
you.

Vicente gently takes the gun from Antonio.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
This gun, and these initials-  
Never forget them.

Vicente stares at Antonio.

VICENTE (CONT'D)  
You will want to find them again.

Marcos looks at Antonio. Antonio stares at Vicente.

The burro bell is in the front yard now.

Vicente moves to sit in a chair in the courtyard facing the door.

MAN (O.S.)  
(from outside)  
Drink now donkey.

Vicente rests the intitialed six shooter across his lap and loads bullets into it from his pocket.

The boys watch him.

Vicente sees THE FATHER and THE MOTHER enter the doorway. He points his gun at the father.

FATHER  
I--

Vicente shoots him quickly.

This is DANTE FERNANDEZ, 49 years old.

Fernandez goes down knocking the pitcher of water onto the floor as he falls.

The mother grabs the gun from Fernandez's holster but Vicente points the gun at her. Vicente sees that Marcos has the house gun pointed at him. Antonio is stares in shock at his dead father.

Marcos and Vicente stare eye to eye for a moment.

Marcos pulls the trigger, but the shot goes wide. He drops the gun to the floor. Vicente doesn't flinch.

Vicente moves toward Marcos.

Vicente slowly reaches for Marcos's gun, puts it back in Marcos's hand and raises it to point at Vicente's own head.

They stare eye to eye but Marcos doesn't pull the trigger.

VICENTE

Honor is in the eyes.

Vicente turns to leave and walks toward his horse in the courtyard.

Marcos watches Vicente ride away up the hill through the agave. Marcos fights to keep the gun pointed at Vicente's back through the kitchen door.