

Juan drops into the prosthetic. He struggles to stand and balances himself. He steps gingerly, painfully as he moves slowly down the balance bar. He pushes through the pain.

INT. HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM - DAY

Juan lies in bed and looks on as the Chaplain reads the Bible to the dying Triple-Amputee. Duane keeps Juan company.

CHAPLAIN

"For where two or more are gathered
in my name, there I am in their
midst."

JUAN

Why are you lying to him? Most men
never get the truth, tell him the
truth.

A single tear falls from the Triple-Amputee's eye. He stares at Juan. He dies.

DUANE

Man, that's a man of God. He was
trying to help that man, offer him
hope in his time of death.

JUAN

Hope? You people lying all the time
to us. Catholic, Protestant, we're
all dying.

Chaplain nods politely at Duane, smiles and patiently exits.

EXT. HOSPITAL SMOKING AREA - DAY

Juan drags on a cigarette. He slings his prosthetic leg over his shoulder, reclines in his wheelchair, squints at the sun.

INT. HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM - A DIFFERENT DAY

Juan sits on the edge of his bed, a military duffle bag rests on the floor below him. He faces a MASTER SERGEANT.

MASTER SERGEANT

We can extend behavioral health
care, Staff Sergeant. You will need
some adjusting to this loss.

Juan shakes his head "no".

JUAN

So, if I want to deploy again?

MASTER SERGEANT

You'll transfer out to Camp Pendelton in California to finish your rehab. I'm recommending you take two weeks Convalescent Leave to think about a civilian career, and spend time with your family. You're young. You can be rehabbed for a job, a career. You have choices.

Juan drops his eyes, discouraged. He turns to look at his dress blues neatly folded behind him on the bed.

EXT. CAMP PENDELTON - DAY

A military transport lands.

SUPER: Camp Pendelton, Oceanside, California

EXT. CAMP PENDELTON ENTRANCE - DAY

A Greyhound bus departs the base.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS AS BUS IS IN MOTION - DAY

Juan, in his dress blues, leans against the window of his seat, away from others on the bus. Embarrassingly, he speaks low into his phone.

JUAN

Yeah. Hey ... mama. Si. Can you pick me up? The bus station.

(frowning)

The old number was disconnected so I looked it up.

(listening)

Well you know I've gone and blown myself up so ... I'm not a Marine no more mama.

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - SOUTH LOS ANGELES - DAY

Juan rides the wheelchair ramp down to the ground. A HARD RAP VERSION OF CALIFORNIA DREAMING STARTS TO PLAY.

The bus pulls off leaving Juan in a wheelchair with his duffle on the ground next to him. He wipes his sweat.

He waits. The sun drops.

He waits, then checks his watch.

LATER

Juan waits, taps his scarred fingers against his wheelchair as the evening sun sets and the sky turns golden.

EXT. SHOULDER OF A SMALL HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Juan navigates his wheelchair awkwardly down the shoulder, his duffle hung securely from the back of his seat.

Sweat falls harder down Juan's face with each push on the wheelchair. Cars WOOSH by; WOOSH-WOOSH! Then a siren; WOOP!

Lights flash behind him. A Mexican man, LAPD DETECTIVE SANTARRO, 52, buzz cut, stickler for the law who rarely bends the rules, pulls over in a black Dodge Charger, mint. He opens his door.

Juan rolls past him embarrassingly. The officer drives slowly behind Juan.

SANTARRO (O.S.)
Soldier. Pull over.

The officer pulls up alongside Juan.

Juan keeps rolling, then BEEP-BEEP-BEEP! Another car pulls over in front of Juan and Santarro. Juan stops rolling.

LILIANA RAMIREZ, 42, hops out of a nice black Range Rover. She's attractive and simultaneously tough and tender, long hair, the latest cut. Long nails, nice jewelry, boob job. Kardashian wannabe. She approaches Officer Santana.

LILIANA
I'm so, so sorry officer, this is my son. Oh, my Juanchito. Look at you. Que te paso, mijo?

She hugs him. He does not reciprocate. The officer raises an eyebrow. Liliana is a whirlwind of a woman, flashes her sexuality whenever she can.

SANTARRO
Well ma'am, he may not be well--

Liliana wheels Juan to her car.

LILIANA
I'll take it from here officer.
Digame hijo. [Talk to me son.]

Santarro nods and drives off, stares at her butt as he leaves. Liliana stares after the car.

LILIANA
Cerdo. [Pig.]

Liliana turns back to Juan. She props herself up on his wheelchair, leans in, grabs his face, speaks low and serious.

LILIANA
Welcome back, son. Don't you ever
leave us like that again.

She pokes his nub. He stifles a shriek.

LILIANA
See what happens when you leave.

Juan lowers his head. Instantly, she softens, holds out her manicure. She exhales loudly.

JUAN
I like your nails, mama. Where did
you get the car?

LILIANA
It's rented, and I still have my
beat-up Honda. Family nail shop is
doing amazing! Cause we never speak
Spanish to the customers behind
their backs.

Juan looks closely at her nails. Diamonds are glued to each fingernail.

LILIANA
Thank you, baby?

EXT. RAMIREZ HOUSE - NIGHT

A nice two-toned 1920s bungalow, with another small house next to the property turned into a very cute nail shop. Fake flowers and nice patio furniture sits on the porch. The Range Rover pulls in and parks in front.

Liliana walks straight into the house. Juan struggles to get out of the car with his duffle. He turns his head to stare--

SMALL PARK ACROSS THE STREET

An Ambulance and police car park next to a small park with playground across the street, lights flashing. PARAMEDICS load someone into the ambulance. It takes off with SIREN on.

INT. RAMIREZ HOUSE - DINING ROOM / FRONT ROOM - DAY.

The morning sun spills sunlight on a mix of Mother Mary statues and candles that line a small table. There are framed pictures of fallen family members, and various dragons and occult symbols, and mixes of Mexican accoutrements.

The home is nicely furnished with hip curtains, nice rug, a white sectional couch, nice dining room table and matching chairs fitting a large family. And of course, the couch and chairs are covered with plastic. A mix of old and new world.

A tattoo gun BUZZES loudly. Lilibiana rests on the shirtless back of LOONEY, 26, filling in a tattoo. His body is covered in tattoos all the way up to his neck. A tattoo above his right eyebrow reads "Looney"; the left "Tune".

LILIANA

Look at this art work on his back.

Looking good, son.

Two men sit on the sectional couch. REZI VASQUEZ, 34, t-shirt and 50ls, weighs out a quarter pound of pot. SCARECROW, 23, built, with lots of face piercings, designer tank-top, plucks his eyebrows with a tweezer as he watches a telenova.

Through a doorway --

INT. JUAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Doorway/common area near the dining room. Juan sits near his bedroom door, viewing his home life in horror.

Juan's old room. There are soccer trophies and posters. A stack of hip-hop CD's line the dresser.

Juan lays his cardboard Medal of Honor on the dresser between his soccer trophies. He glances up at --

JUAN'S POV:

His mother tattoos his brother, his uncle weighs the marijuana, and his cousin plucks his eye brows.