

LEGENDARY BEASTS OF THE BORDER

Written by

Matt Burch

Property of Matt Burch
WGAW REGISTERED

FADE IN:

EXT. AGUILOS FARM - CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO - PRE-DAWN

An old adobe ranch house sleeps in the hushed pre-dawn blue. Patchy desert scrub all around. A darkened spine of mountains visible in the distance.

INT. KITCHEN - AGUILOS FARM - CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO - PRE-DAWN

JORGE AGUILOS, 54, desert-hardened Mestizo features, stirs his morning coffee with chapped worker's hands.

He HUMS an old Revolutionary tune -- "La Adelita" -- takes a healthy slurp of black courage, slides on a sweat-stained Stetson, heads out into the dim morning light.

EXT. PORCH - AGUILOS FARM - PRE-DAWN

Aguilos grabs a feed bag and flashlight, leads with his good hip to the livestock fences, calling out gently to his herd.

AGUILOS
(in Spanish, subtitled)
*Good morning, lovelies. Rise and
shine.*

SILENCE. Just the faint sound of BUZZING.

AGUILOS
Let's see those lovely winter coat--

Aguilos drops the feed bag, nostrils filling with a PUTRID STENCH. Then, the BUZZING OF FLIES. A SWARM OF FLIES.

He clicks on his flashlight, directing the BEAM OVER...

A DEVASTATION OF WOOL AND FLESH

Sheep and goats scattered like discarded cotton swabs. Their necks twisted at severe angles, their coats matted in a sticky spill of dark jugular blood.

Aguilos' eyes rove the massacre with the flashlight beam. He shakes his head slowly, resolutely. Clicks off the light.

EXT. STOKER'S TRAILER - TEXAS BORDER TOWN - PRE-DAWN

A tiny prefab shoebox just off the highway. Everything about it looks temporary, as if dropped there by a twister.

A blaring MOTOWN-INSPIRED RING TONE breaks the pre-dawn silence.

INT. STOKER'S TRAILER - TEXAS BORDER TOWN - CONTINUOUS

A black hand reaches from beneath a woolen blanket on the couch, slaps blindly for the TRILLING iPhone on the coffee table. It topples a few Lone Star beer empties before silencing the alarm, pulling the blanket to reveal...

RAWLSTON STOKER, mid-30s, a slight paunch marring his formerly fit Detroit Police Department physique.

He glances to a small flat-screen muted and tuned to CNN, sees a spiraling news graphic: "DISORDER ON THE BORDER." He wearily grabs the remote, dares to raise the volume.

CNN REPORTER

...more bad news for potential border crossers this morning. Texas Governor Whitey Johnston has called for the deployment of armed UCAV "hunter-killer" drones in aerial patrols over hot-spots in El Paso, Nogales and McAllen, Texas as part of his Operation Turkey Shoot campaign to crack down on what he terms an "illegal alien invasion." Johnston's aggressive tactics, considered by many a clear case of unconstitutional state overreach into federal jurisdiction, are meeting with heavy resistance from Dems on the Hill, as well as protestors in the aforementioned cities...

Stoker's sleepy eyes scan the shouting PROTESTORS on-screen holding signs that read "Abolish ICE! De-fund the CBP!" He sighs, glances to a nearby chair where his green Customs and Border Patrol uniform hangs listlessly.

STOKER

(to himself)

Brother, how did you get here?

Stoker looks past the uniform to a dart board on the wall. An old engagement photo of Stoker in his younger, happier days in DPD dress blues with his arms around a PRETTY SOUTHERN BLONDE with a nose ring. The photo is full of dart holes.

Stoker nods his head, haggard.

STOKER
Riiight...

He throws another dart. It hits her nose ring, dead center.

EXT. AGUILOS FARM - CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO - PRE-DAWN

The night sky pinkens into dawn as BEATRIZ AGUILOS, mid-20s, an intense earthen beauty wearing a waitress uniform, steps down from a dusty rural commuter bus with a knapsack. She walks the roadside to her family's farmhouse.

INT. KITCHEN - AGUILOS FARM - CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO - CONTINUOUS

Beatriz enters, calling out to her father. Finds a hastily scrawled note in Spanish on the kitchen table next to a wadded roll of pesos. Worried, she picks it up, reads.

ON THE NOTE, SUBTITLED:

"The coyote has destroyed our herd. I have gone into the mountains to hunt him down. Take this money and go north with your brother across the border. There is nothing left for us here. God-willing, I will soon join you on the Other Side. Love, Papi."

Beatriz lowers the note, deep concern creasing her brow. She calls out to her brother.

BEATRIZ
Jaime!

EXT. DESERT MOUNTAINS - CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO - PRE-DAWN

Aguilos' old Ford headlights bear down on a cave entrance in the mountain base. He parks, gets out slowly with shotgun and flashlight finding...

A SET OF TRACKS

Leading into the cave. They're padded. Four-legged with visible claw marks. Large claw marks.

AGUILOS
*You come to my house, coyote. I
come into yours.*

Aguilos pumps his shotgun.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - TEXAS BORDER TOWN - PRE-DAWN

Stoker's dusty Border Patrol Expedition passes on an empty two-lane roadway. The muffled sound of old Motown trails in its wake.

INT. STOKER'S EXPEDITION - ON THE ROAD - SAME

Stoker, now in CBP uniform, trades bites of a sticky bear claw with slugs from a tall cup of convenience-store coffee as he steers and sings along to Chris Clark's 1966 standard "Love's Gone Bad" on his satellite radio.

STOKER

Feel a pounding in my brain / Ice-
cold water runnin' through my veins
/ Bad taste in my mouth from bitter
tears / Heart so sad 'cause love's
gone bad

(bites bear claw, sours)
Or maybe it's just the pastry.

He pulls back the wax paper to check the stale donut as --
THUNK! The Expedition's front tire suddenly hits a large
pothole, popping the top off Stoker's coffee and drenching
the front of his uniform.

He takes his eyes off the road briefly to assess the damage,
failing to notice the LARGE ONCOMING SHADOW in the
approaching intersection on his driver's side until...

BAM! He suddenly swerves wildly on IMPACT, his truck
fishtailing 180 degrees before SQUEALING to a stop.

EXT. INTERSECTION - TEXAS HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Stoker steps from his battered truck, unhurt but fuming.

He's met by four men standing before two black Escalades,
headlights off. Three of them wear narco threads, expressions
drier than desert rain -- tell-tale PISTOLEROS (gunmen).

But the fourth man is smiling, though it's hard to tell
through the scar tissue complexion, one which gives his whole
being a leathery, reptilian sheen. This is probably why they
call him EL COCODRILO, "The Crocodile."

STOKER

Funny, I thought coyotes were back
in their holes by this time of
morning.

Cocodrilo emits a tempered laugh.

COCODRILO

And I thought La Migra only kept to
utility roads.

STOKER

Must be in a hurry to get
somewhere. Or get something
somewhere. I hear you're running
loads for Albarrán these days.
Human and chemical.

COCODRILO

Or maybe just my mother's laundry.

The gunmen snicker at this. Stoker stews. Glances to the
bulges in the gunmen's jackets. Glances back to his own
smoking wreck in defeat.

STOKER

I'm guessing a dude like you
doesn't have an insurance card.

COCODRILO

No, but I can show you my green
card if you like.
(nodding to Stoker's
stained shirt)
Greener than your cute little
uniform, La Migra.

Cocodrilo reaches into his pocket, removes a FAT GREEN WAD OF
BILLS, peels off a few thousand. He offers the bills to
Stoker, FLAPPING in the desert wind.

STOKER

Keep it. It's blood money. I know
where it comes from.

Cocodrilo looks down to the bills in mock astonishment.

COCODRILO

But it's official U.S. currency?
Are you saying your government
deals in blood? Separates mothers
from their children at the border?

(MORE)

COCODRILO (cont'd)
Shoots down poor mojados from the
sky with killer drones? No!

The three pistoleros snicker again. Stoker bites his tongue.

STOKER
Let's just say you're lucky that
I'm off duty and it's a government
vehicle, not mine.

Cocodrilo pockets the fat wad, tipping his hat.

COCODRILO
I'll be sure to count my blessings.
Right after I'm done counting my
millions.

Stoker holds his ground, unwavering, as the four men return
to their shiny new Escalades, drive away.

He turns back to his own battered border patrol vehicle.
Notices SOMETHING further beyond in the bushes.

INT. CAVES - DESERT MOUNTAINS, CHIHUAHUA - SAME

Aguilos moves through the darkened chasm, flashlight beam
roving over twisted rock. He spots a SHEEN OF FUR in the
distance, readies the shotgun. But the fur lays there inert.

Aguilos lowers his shotgun, raises the flashlight to find...

A DEAD COYOTE

Completely emaciated, shriveled in fact. No signs of
decomposition or decay. Just yellow eyes locked in frozen
horror. This is fresh kill.

Aguilos nudges the animal carcass with his gun barrel.

AGUILOS
*So skinny. Yet you've just eaten a
full meal of my sheep.*

He shines his light closer, crouches, stroking the fur. His
fingers come to TWO CLEAN HOLES in the coyote's neck.

Aguilos' eyes GO WIDE. As do his nostrils, filling with...

AGUILOS
Sulfur...

A TINY HIGH-PITCHED SQUEAL, like a tortured infant's cry, RIPS THROUGH the cave. Aguilos spins with gun and flashlight, his beam landing on...

A NEST OF TWIGS

Filled with something FLESHY, WET, NEWBORN. Under the light, it SQUEALS LOUDER, assuming the brown pallor of the twigs.

Aguilos VOMITS, unleashing a SHORT-RANGE BLAST and EXPLODING the thing into a SPEW OF GORE as he stumbles back against the cave wall, FLASHLIGHT SHATTERING.

He feels his way back frantically along the cave wall, sun's first light creeping in. But the light suddenly vanishes, blocked by a hulking, SHADOWY FIGURE at the cave entrance.

Aguilos slowly backs away under the figure's gaze, his mouth dropping wide in horror. He weakly takes aim with his shotgun until an unidentifiable appendage rockets from the darkness and -- WHAM!

EXT. AGUILOS FARM - CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO - DAWN

Beatriz crouches before the sea of twisted, bloodied sheep in the livestock pen. She gazes from the carnage in concern to the sun now pushing over the jagged mountain face.

JAIME AGUILOS, 17, thin and boyish, approaches from behind in boxers, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

JAIME

*Why did you wake me up? It's 6 AM.
Not even a school day.*

Beatriz pushes her father's note his way. Jaime snatches it, reads. He notices the pen full of slaughtered sheep and goats for the first time.

JAIME

A coyote did all this?

BEATRIZ

*Not the type of coyote you're
thinking.*

JAIME

Then who?

BEATRIZ
 (resolute)
Get dressed. Pack your things.
We're going across. Like Papa says.

EXT. DESERT BRUSH - U.S. / MEXICO BORDER - DAWN

CLOSE ON A DEAD MAN'S FACE locked in FROZEN HORROR, DESERT BUGS crawling from his open mouth. He has Mexican features, but his bronze skin has been white-washed pale in death.

Stoker stands over the body as the cartel Escalades disappear against an orange sun on the horizon.

He crouches to the ground, reaches to the dead man's neck, moves aside his crucifix necklace. Above his jugular are TWO TINY HOLES. But these are blood crusted, jagged.

Stoker glances to a wooden post a few yards away. Scrawled writing on the marker reads: "U.S. / Mexico." The body lies on the Mexico side...by inches.

Stoker sighs, reluctantly snaps an iPhone pic.

INT. CAVE - DESERT MOUNTAINS, CHIHUAHUA - DAWN

Hundreds of miles away, Aguilos' body now lays SHRIVELED, SUCKED DRY like a human raisin. On his neck, TWO CLEAN HOLES. Not a drop of blood remains.

Nearby, a BLOOD RED POV stares down into the nest of remains. A MOURNFUL PRIMAL WAIL echoes out from the cave into the surrounding mountains becoming...

INT. DRUID'S EXPEDITION - MOVING - TEXAS DESERT - MORNING

...the HIGH-PITCHED DEATH METAL SCREAM of Slayer's Tom Araya ("Evil Has No Boundaries") playing LOUD on a truck stereo.

AGENT DEREK DRUDZINSKI, aka "Druid", 30s, pale but pumped in his forest green uniform, bounces over the corrugated landscape, tweaked eyes scanning behind wraparound Oakleys.

He unhooks the rover next to a sloshing Monster Energy Drink.

DRUDZINSKI
 Cutter 2, come in. I got nothing
 but agave and armadillo shit out
 here. What's the read on that sign
 again?

EXT. DESERT SECTOR 2 - U.S. / MEXICO BORDER - SAME

A steady hand adorned with a beaded tribal bracelet hovers in the air above a LIGHT TRACK IN THE DIRT, reading the heat from the ground.

AGENT LIONEL PROUDFOOT, 44, reservation-raised from a long line of Apache, crouches above the track in the middle of a sand drag. His sad, steady eyes scan to three other track sets nearby.

PROUDFOOT
(into shoulder radio)
Four bodies total. Approximately
175, 200 pounds in weight. All
headed in a northeast direction.
They hit this drag post-dawn
judging from the morning bug sign.
I'd put it around 8:15. Maybe 8:25.

SQUAWK. A bit of Slayer bleeds through.

DRUDZINSKI (V.O.)
But definitely not 8:30?

PROUDFOOT
You're mocking me, Drudzinski?

DRUDZINSKI (V.O.)
Only if you're wearing moccasins.

Proudfoot ignores Druid's racist quip, continues studying the track.

PROUDFOOT
These gentlemen appear to be
wearing carpet shoes. Not very good
ones either.

INT. DRUID'S EXPEDITION - MOVING - TEXAS DESERT - SAME

Druid bounces along, still scanning.

DRUDZINSKI
Rug Jumpers. Jesus. When are these
geniuses gonna learn that tying
shag remnants to their feet just
makes 'em slower, not fuckin'
invisible. Garrett's Oscars should
have picked 'em up an hour ago.

Druid squawks through to...

EXT. DESERT SECTOR 1 - U.S. / MEXICO BORDER - SAME

Another Expedition ("Cutter 1") parked next to a creosote bush. A WAYLON JENNINGS BALLAD trickles out from the truck stereo mixing with the sound of LABORED MALE GRUNTING.

DRUDZINSKI (V.O.)
 Sheriff, you evaccing the morning
 bran again? Get your constipated
 cowpoke ass to the stable!

A tan Stetson rises behind the bush, followed by the tired eyes of AGENT JED GARRETT, 60s, aka "The Sheriff." He zips his green trousers, walks to the Expedition, holding a toilet paper roll and electronic sensor ("Oscar").

Garrett throws the TP roll on the dash, unhooks his rover.

GARRETT
 10-4, Drudzinski. Maybe if ya
 turned down the devil music a man
 could hear ya.

Another blast of Slayer, followed by...

DRUDZINSKI (V.O.)
 It ain't the metal. It's your
 Metamucil. We got four bodies in
 country for the last hour and not a
 peep from Sector 1.

Garrett picks up the broken sensor, circuits dangling.

GARRETT
 That's because the damn Oscar's
 bust. Looks like somebody took a
 sledgehammer to it. But I don't
 need gadgets. I used to cut sign
 with a quarter horse and a
 Winchester--

DRUDZINSKI (V.O.)
 Yeah, yeah. Back when cell phones
 were carrier pigeons, right?

GARRETT
 Sumbitch, you need backup or what?

EXT. DESERT SECTOR 4 - U.S. / MEXICO BORDER - SAME

BAM! BAM! BAM! Three rounds tear through the forehead of a smiling local politician on a highway campaign poster: "Re-Elect Governor Whitey Johnston -- Building a Safer Border."

AGENT RONDINE STAATS aka "Stacks," 28, a square-jawed Nordic blonde, holsters her H&K P2000 just below a heaving chest stretching the limits of her forest-green uniform.

She crouches to retrieve the spent casings, finds a PINK DESERT FLOWER growing amid the shells.

DRUDZINSKI (V.O.)
(over the death metal)
Cutter 4, come in. We need those
beautiful Double D's to run cutoff.
I got four bodies far inferior to
yours headed that way.

Staats marches to her Expedition, slides the desert flower into her visor next to a snapshot of a female wrestler -- "Terry" -- presumably her girlfriend. She grabs the rover.

STAATS
Druid, what did I say about
addressing me--

DRUDZINSKI (V.O.)
(miming static)
Pssh. What was that? Pssh.
Something about undressing you?

Staats grimaces, tries again.

STAATS
Do I need to lodge another
harassment complaint--

DRUDZINSKI (V.O.)
Pssh. What was that? Pssh. "Lodge
your ass." Pssh. "Against my
taint."

Staats rolls her eyes, gives up.

STAATS
Just tell me what vector.

DRUDZINSKI (V.O.)
D-27.

STAATS

Roger that. Cutter 4 in pursuit.

Staats cranks the Lizzo on her radio, PEELS OUT kicking dust and ladylike aggression as...

INT. DRUID'S EXPEDITION - MOVING - TEXAS DESERT - SAME

Druid re-cradles the rover, spots FOUR FIGURES on the horizon. He pulls his field binocs up to his eyes.

HIS POV: FOUR MEXICAN CROSSERS, mid-20s, hurrying for the highway, ditching the "carpet shoes" tied to their feet.

DRUDZINSKI

Well, what do you know? A few
Mexican fence-jumping beans.
Familiar Mexican fence-jumping
beans.

EXT. DRAG 27 - U.S. / MEXICO BORDER - SAME

Running with the Ortega Brothers -- PABLO, PACO, PAOLO, and PETE (long story). They hurry into a dry river bed shouting "La Migra! La Migra!" as...

EXT. DRY RIVER BED - U.S. / MEXICO BORDER - SAME

UURCH! Cutter 4 pulls up to the opposite lip of the wash, kicking dirt. The Ortegas slow up, stymied as...

UURCH! Cutter 3 SCREECHES to a halt on the opposite ledge. Druid gets out brandishing a riot gun and a wild glare, Satanic verse spewing over his loudspeaker.

UURCH! UURCH! Cutters 2 & 3 surround them from the other side. A six-foot Apache Indian gets out calmly, followed by a middle-aged cowboy.

The Ortegas' eyes boggle as they whip back to Cutter 4, see Staats getting out chest-first, plastic cuffs in hand.

STAATS

United States Border Patrol!
(in Spanish)
Stop where you are.

The four brothers turn to each other, grin. Immediately barrel in the well-built muchacha's direction as...

Druid sidles up next to Garrett, smiling.

DRUDZINSKI

Never fails. They always run to those hills. Just like the Iron Maiden jam.

GARRETT

Iron Mammaries is more like it.

RUNNING WITH PABLO. He barrels straight for Staats' chest, a smile on his face. A smile soon wiped away as...

WHAM! Staats ducks and sweeps his legs with her baton. Pablo goes down hard in the sand. She has the plastic cuffs on his wrists in seconds, spins him over, her iron cleavage pressing down into his face.

STAATS

Do you need water or medical attention?

Pablo shakes his head rapidly, simultaneously frightened and aroused.

PABLO

No. No agua.

Paco turns to run, until Staats spins off Pablo, sweeps his legs too, pulls him into a tight coitus-like scissor-lock.

STAATS

I said stop where you are.

Further away, Paolo hurries through the brush running into...

DRUDZINSKI

Hey, Paolo! Haven't seen you since last Tuesday.

Druid screams like a banshee, FIRES A SCATTER BLAST into the air. Which only makes Paolo run faster into...

ZZZT! A waiting rodeo-rope tightening around his legs. He falls, bucking like a scared calf as Garrett reels him in.

NEARBY

Proudfoot calmly follows a set of tracks, spotting blood droplets in the sand. The tracks end as he hits a stretch of concrete leading to the drainage tunnel.

INSIDE THE TUNNEL: Pete crouches in fear, nursing a nasty BARBED WIRE WOUND.

Proudfoot gazes to the sky, spots a TURKEY BUZZARD circling above the tunnel. He nods to the buzzard, as if thanking him, walks to a manhole cover. He lifts it, casually drops a pepper spray bomb from his belt inside.

A SMALL MUFFLED EXPLOSION. Pete stumbles from the tunnel, coughing, covered in RED DUST. Proudfoot waits there patiently, no gun.

PROUDFOOT

Don't worry, it's only chili powder imported from your country. It may sting for a bit, but, believe me, less than a bullet from the white man's gun.

Pete nods blindly, eyes watering, mouth on fire. Proudfoot hands him a towel and a water bottle.

PROUDFOOT

Welcome to America, friend.

EXT. U.S. BORDER PATROL STATION - TEXAS SIDE - NOON

A low-rise concrete slab in the rural Southwest Texas desert. A jumble of antennas rise from the roof. A fleet of green and gold sealed Ford Expeditions are caged in an adjoining gate.

INT. U.S. BORDER PATROL STATION - TEXAS SIDE - NOON

Sweat-soaked Stoker BUZZES in with his card key. He lingers under the wheeze of an old overhead AC unit, cooling off after his two-mile walk, before approaching his desk. He finds someone already there, whispering into his land-line.

Stoker clears his throat. ERNESTO RIVAS, 26, a lean, polished Latino man in civvies, hangs up, stands at attention.

Stoker glances from Rivas to a nearby holding cell where a few MIGRANT DETAINEES yell out for phone calls. It's a quick glance but long enough for Rivas to realize...

RIVAS

Oh, no. I'm not--
(offering his hand)
Ernesto Rivas. You're supposed to be training me?

Stoker realizes, takes Rivas' firm grip wearily.

STOKER

Right. The new probie. Fresh from the Academy.

Rivas shrugs sheepishly, a forced humility that Stoker notes.

STOKER

Your uniform's in the locker room. Go ahead and get suited up. Be with you in a sec.

Rivas nods as Stoker exits and catches up with...

STATION CHIEF LYLE LOMBARDI, 60s, a distracted company man counting the days to his retirement. He comes through a rear entrance with a suit bag slung over his shoulder.

STOKER

Chief, can I talk to you a minute?

LOMBARDI

Can you walk and talk, Stoker?

STOKER

That's about all I can do. Somebody sideswiped my Expedition this morning and--

LOMBARDI

Goddammit. You aren't supposed to be drivin' fleet trucks off-site. That's personal use, and there's a form for that. Takes about two weeks to process. Which in government terms means two years.

Lombardi reaches the door to his office -- "Lombardi - Station Chief" -- unlocks it. Stoker follows him into...

INT. LOMBARDI'S OFFICE - BORDER PATROL STATION - CONTINUOUS

A cluttered office awash in un-filed papers. The only thing organized is the series of framed photographs on the wall: Lombardi's THREE GRANDSONS in high-school football gear.

LOMBARDI

(nodding to file pile)

As you can see, I got enough bureaucratic turds lying around as it is.