

THE LAST THREE DAY OF LYDIA RAMIREZ

WE OPEN ON A VERY WIDE SHOT OF A FLAT DESERT LAKE BED. IT'S VAST FOREVER, AND BEAUTIFUL. STANDING OFF IN THE DISTANCE PERHAPS TO FAR AWAY TO ALMOST SEE, AND BECAUSE OF IT PERHAPS WE DONT BELIEVE OUR EYES.

VO: (IMAGINE THE WONDERFUL VOICE OF RENE RUSSO) Once there was a Little girl, she was five.

THERE IN THE DISTANCE WE SEE WHAT POSSIBLY LOOKS LIKE A SMALL ALL WHITE ANGEL, LINEN DRAPING DOWN, AND BIG WHITE WINGS, BUT A SMALL ANGEL BECAUSE SHE ALSO, IT SEEMS, IS A LITTLE GIRL.

VO: She could have been almost any little five-year-old girl.

NOW WE ARE CLOSE-UP ON HER BEAUTIFUL ALMOST CLAY WHITE FACE. HER EYES ARE STARK AND REAL AND FACING BOLDY OUT TOWARDS WHATEVER IS BEFORE HER

VO: She could have been this girl.

AND ABRUPTLY WE CUT TO A SERIES OF PORTRAITS OF ALL KINDS OF FIVE YEAR GIRLS, AFRICAN AMERICAN, ASIAN, WHITE, AFRIICAN. AND OUR STORY TELLER SAYING THESE WORDS UNDERNEATH

VO: Or this girl here. Or this girl. This girl. Even this girl. Quite possibly she was not unlike your own little girl, or your niece, or your sister even,

OUR NARRATIVE ESSAY CONTINUES BUT NOW INSTEAD OF PORTRAITS, A YOUNG GIRL IS RUNNING THROUGH SUN SPECKLED WOODS WITH FLOWERS, THE PETALS FALLING AND RIDING ON THE BREEZE AS IT FALLS. BASICALLY THE MONOLOGUE THAT FOLLOWS AND THE WORDS SHE SAYS ARE BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATED BY VIGNETTES OF FIVE YEAR GIRLS BEING THEMSELVES, DANCING TICTOC STYLE, CRYING, HUGGING THEIR CAT, ETC.

VO: Only five years old, the world was still so new, but she was perceptively aware, listening to every word said around her, birds in the morning singing, music on a radio, watching a wasp in a window, rain drops

AGAIN WE SEE A BEAUTIFUL ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT WE ARE BEING TOLD, LITERAL BUT STRONG IMAGERY, COMPELLING US TO WATCH IT.

VO: She was afraid of things too. She was afraid of the dark, and the thunder, the wind that rattled the shutters. She was afraid of being left all alone.

LIGHTENING CRASHES AND FLASHES ACROSS A HORIZON. A SHUDDER BANGS SHUT, AND THEN DANCES IN A RHYTHM BACK AND FORTH. WE SEE LYDIA AS SHE IS, NOT AS AN ANGEL, JUST A GIRL, BUT LIT LIKE A CARRAVAGIO PAINTING, SOFTLY LIT AND THE DETAILS BEAUTIFULLY LIVING IN THE SHADOWS LIT BY A SINGLE CANDLE. SHE SITS IN HER BEAD, HEAD CRADLED IN HER KNEES.

VO: She could have been any girl, except that she was also Mexican trying to cross our border.

WE CUT BACK TO THE ANGEL AGAIN STARING OFF INTO THE DISTANCE STILL. AND AS THE VOICE CONTINUES TO READ SHE STARTS TO WALK, SLOWLY. AND WE FOLLOW SLOWLY BEHIND HER, WITH CLOSE-UPS ON THE FEATHERS ON HER WINGS, THE TORN AND TANGLED WHITE TRAILS OF FABRIC THAT DRAG THROUGH THE DIRT BEHIND HER.

VO: At least this is what we imagine because we never got to know this Little girl. And nor will you. Except through this story being told to you now that we pieced together from the pieces we found, of what we know was left of her, when she died all alone out in the unforgiving landscape of West Texas.

WE SEE VIGNETTES OF WEST TEXAS NOW. A BILLBOARD FADED ON THE SIDE OF A ROAD. BARBWIRE STRETCHING FROM POST TO POST, ROLLING LANDSCAPE SOFT FOCUS BEHIND THE BARBS. A TRAIN ROLL BY ON TRACKS SLIGHTLY SET ABOVE THE TEXAS LANDSCAPE.

NOW WE CUT TO A FAR AWAY SHOT OF BORDER PATROL AGENT ON HORSEBACK. THE HORSE IS ANXIOUS AND HE HAS TO KEEP THE REIGNS BACK TO KEEP THE HORSE WHERE IT IS WHILE HE IS LOOKING DOWN AT SOMETHING.

VO: A border patrol agent, originally from England but who came to America to get into law enforcement, the FBI, to be exact, ends up on horseback in Texas, wrote this in his journal.

BORDER PATROL AGENT: (ENGLISH ACCENT) I saw the coat first, and what was left of a back pack, half buried in the dirt, but I could see the pink outline and the face of the character, The Little Mermaid. And then I saw the bones of her one hand, like it was reaching for something.

THE BORDER PATROLMAN IS OFF HIS HORSE AND NOW LEANING DOWN TOWARDS WHAT HE SEES. WE CUT TO MORE CLOSE-UP AND LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER. AND WE SEE HIM DUST THE DIRT AWAY FROM THE BONES OF HER HAND, BUT CAREFUL NOT TO DISTURB ANYTHING.

VO: So, on a cool but still summer late afternoon, he found the small bleached white bones of her fingers, and hand, but that was all. The rest scavenged by coyotes. The rest claimed on the dust and wind of Texas just north of the border, some two hours east of Juarez.

WE SEE A FORENSIC TEAM FROM A FEW DIFFERENT ANGLES AND DISTANCES, LOOKING FOR MORE CLUES.

VO: THE FORENSIC TEAM GATHERED CLUES THAT SAID SIMPLY AND CLEARLY SHE WAS NOT ONE OF OURS, SHE WAS MEXICAN, AND HAD JUST GOTTEN HERSELF LOST, AND SO THEY DIDNT LOOK MUCH FURTHER.

WE SEE THE SCENE FROM A FAIR DISTANCE AWAY. AND THEN, WE PULL EVEN FARTHER AWAY WHERE WE FIND IN THE DIRT, A CELL PHONE.

VO: But maybe if they had they might have found the last remains of a Smart phone, the one she dropped once the battery drained, and she could no longer look at the last of her life before she left for America.

WE NOW SLOWLY SEEM TO TRAVEL RIGHT INTO THE PHONE ITSELF AND PAST RUSTED THINGS, AND WE TRAVEL DOWN THE PATTERNS OF THE SODDERED WORKINGS OF THE PHONE, AND THEN INTO THE CHIP WE TRAVEL WHERE WE HEAR THE FADED SOUNDS OF CHILDREN LAUGHING. AND THEN WE SEE THE FLASH IMAGE OF A BIRTHDAY PARTY, A STICK SWINGING AT A PINATA, WE SEE OUR LITTLE GIRL LAUGHING AT HOW HER BIG GOOFY UNCLE CAN'T FIND THE PINATA WITH THE STICK. UNTIL HE DOES AND CANDY EXPLODES EVERYWHERE. KIDS ARE CHEERING. THEN WE A SELFIE WITH HER AND HER UNCLE

WE CUT FROM INSIDE THE PHONE TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD ONLY NOW THE PHONE IS IN OUR ANGELS HANDS AND SHE IS WATCHING WHAT WE WERE WATCHING. SHE LAUGHS AT HER UNCLE MAKING FACES AT HER. AND THEN PHONE DIES AND HER FACE CHANGES. AND WE FEEL A PIECE OF HER DIE WITH IT.

VO: OH THE THINGS OF LOST CHILDREN'S JOY. MAY OUR JOYS PERISH WITH HER IF SHE PERISH'S LIKE THIS ALONE.

LYDIA THE ANGEL NOW LAYS HER HEAD DOWN, A WING FOLDED FOR HER HEAD TO REST, IN THE DIRT OF THE DESERT. AS SHE FALLS ASLEEP. WE FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON MORNING. OUR ANGEL LYDIA'S EYES SLOWLY OPEN. IN FRONT OF HER A SMALL GECKO LOOKING BACK, GREEN AND BLINKING EYES. THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER FOR THE LONGEST MOMENT.

VO: They say she probably perished in April when the sun was not so blistering hot, because had it been August she would not have lasted even a day. But she wandered with no food or whatever, only five, 34 miles from the border into America.

NOW WE SEE A SERIES OF VIGNETTES OF THIS WHITE FACED ANGEL AND HER DAY IN THE DESERT. SHE STANDS NEXT TO TALL SAGUEROS, SITTING UP HIGH ON A ROCK FOR THE VIEW TO SEE IF SHE COULD SEE A WAY TO GO, WHERE TO GO.

VO She had an empty water bottle in her backpack, which may have helped her as well. She also had a curious Little item, what seemed to be the corner of a piñata in her bag. And a note that was faded to almost white, by the sun and what Little rain had fallen upon her, for what might have been almost two years, that they also knew, but the note for all it lost still said Feliz Cumpleanos. Happy birthday

WE SEE ALL THESE BEAUTIFULL DETAILS, BEAUTIFULLY SHOT.

VO She had a doll as well, or one was found near her, and also beaten by the time spent there still amongst the brush and the cacti, the sun wearing on the rubber of her skin, had likely always been hers, through thick and thin it seems, and a sweater, which she wore at night and may have helped her survive for three full days and three long nights.

WE SEE THE DOLL NOT LAYING IN THE DIRT BUT BEING CARRIED ALONG, HANGING BY ONE ARM,

BUT IN THE HAND OF THE ANGEL. THE HEAD WHICH HAS NO HAIR AND IS MADE OMINOUS BY ITS TIME OUT IN THE SUN, HANGS LIFELESS AS THE ANGEL WALKS ALMOST LETTING THE FEET DRAG IN THE DIRT. AND THEN AFTER A BIT SHE JUST LETS IT GO AND THE DOLLS HEAD FALLS TO THE DESERT FLOOR.

VO: That night in a border town cantina the border patrol conjured every way they think she may have been pulled away from her family, how had she been separated from her family, and why had no one called attention to her being lost.

WE SEE THE IMAGES OF MEN TALKING IN A MEXICAN STYLE CANTINA, IN BORDER PATROL UNIFORMS STILL.

VO: Well there are so many stories that we know that could be borrowed to tell her peril. Perhaps she was walking through the arroyos, her and her mother, father, sisters? And a coyote paid to guide them. And perhaps they met up with a sinister few with guns, and terror and confusion broke out, and scattered they were and maybe the mother taken, her sisters, maybe all killed or held hostage

WE FIRST SEE A SERIES OF STARK IMAGERY, FILMED AT NIGHT AND BY FLASHLIGHTS, PEOPLE RUNNING, FACES QUICK EDITED IN TERROR. OUR GIRL LYDIA SCREAMING AS SHE RUNS. ITS VERY SURREAL, AND PROVOKES A FEELING OF AN UNSETTLED BRUTAL WORLD. WE SEE LYDIA

LOOKING DOWN FROM WHERE SHE IS HIDING AND THERE BELOW WE SEE THE FLASHLIGHTS AND FOUR BY FOURS CHURNING UP THE DUST.

VO. Somehow Lydia escaped while her mother and sisters perhaps held captive to be sold into slavery, or raped and killed and buried. This we know that something like this happens, every night somewhere on that long long thin line that stretches from one ocean to the other.

WE SEE THE IMAGES OF YOUNG MEXICAN WOMEN AND GIRLS, LIT BY STARK FLASH LIGHTS IT SEEMS LIKE. THEY ARE ALMOST LIKE GHOSTS JUST STARING AT THE CAMERA, PORTRAITS OF GHOSTS.

THEN WE SEE THE STARK AND TERRIFIED AND BROKEN HEARTED FACE AND EYES OF LYDIAS MOTHER FACING OUT THE BACK OF THE TRUCK SHE IS IN, HANDS QUICK TIED BEHIND HER BACK, TEARS DOWN HER FACE, SEARCHING THE DESERT FOR HER DAUGHTER AS THE TRUCK RUMBLES AWAY FROM US AND INTO THE DISTANCE.

WE FADE TO BLACK FOR JUST A SECOND. AND THEN FADE UP ON A SEMI TRAILER PARKED ON THE SIDE OF A HIGHWAY. CARS ARE RACING BY.

VO: We know that last year a semi-trailer with 24 mostly Mexican illegals was left in the hot August Arizona sun, the driver panicked and abandoned them, not thinking to open the back door

WE SEE HIM RUNNING, AWAY, AND WE SEE THERE'S A WALMART LOOKS LIKE WAY OFF IN THE DISTANCE THIS IS A WIDE SHOT LOOKING STRAIGHT ON THE SIDE OF THE SEMI'S TRAILER.

ITS WHITE SO WE SUPER IMPOSE IN BIG BOLD LETTERS, LIKE ITS ON THE SIDE OF THE TRUCK, '24 MEXICANS WERE BAKED TO DEATH IN THE BACK OF THIS TRUCK'.

WE SEE THE PATROL CAR DRIVING UP SLOWLY. WE SEE THE HIGHWAY PATROL GUYS GET OUT. THEY CUT THE LOCK AND OPEN THE DOOR.

VO: The truck sat in plain site for three days. So many many people driving by. Eight children, in the back. 24 hours for the last ones to die.

THE SMELL KNOCKS THEM OFF THEIR FEET ALMOST. ONE STARTS HEAVING NEXT TO THE PATROL CAR. WE SEE IN THE BACK OF THE TRUCK FROM A DISTANCE. ITS AUSWHITZ LOOKING. WE FADE TO BLACK

VO For fun on a Friday night Cartel kids from Nogales sit themselves on a butte and watch with binoculars down into the long dried river bed for Mexicans walking to America. They race in their four by fours. A family of five, and the Cartel kids steal all their belongings, their clothes on their backs and the shoes on their feet, and they're just left their standing, in a close circle to hide each other, looking bewildered, knowing that this was their end. Most likely.

WE SEE A FAMILY OF MEXICANS NAKED HIDIING THEIR NAKEDNESS AS BEST THEY CAN. AND THE TRUCK DRIVING AWAY AND THE CARTEL KIDS LAUGHING AS THEY LEAVE.

VO: A THOUSAND STORIES FROM BORDER PATROL AND RANCHERS THROUGH THE YEARS, THIS GUY FOUND IN A BARN WITH NO LEG, A TOURNAQUET KEEPING HIM ALIVE, AND THE FAMILY THAT CARRIED HIM THERE, LOOKING WIDE EYED FROM THIRST

VO: SO WHAT GOD WOULD LET A PRECIOUS CHILD TO PERISH ALONE SUCH A BRUTAL PUZZLE TO CONSTRUCT. BUT PERHAPS SHE WAS STOLEN FROM HER PERILOUS STORY, AND MADE THIS ANGEL, AND HE REMOVED HER SUFFERING, AND SHE WANDERED WHITE CHALKED SKIN AND GRAND WINGS THAT WHISPERED IN THE WIND, IN THE ENDS OF HER FEATHERS, SHIVERING IN THE TWILIGHT OF HER TIME ON EARTH.

HERE WE SEE GRAND AND EPIC SHOTS OF LYDIA STANDING ON A HIGH FORMATION OF ROCKS AND EARTH, CIRCLING HER BY DRONE SHOT.

VO: PERHAPS SHE DID NOT SUFFER AT ALL, AND REJOICED WITH SKIES FILLED WITH COLORFUL BIRDS, AND THINGS SHE LOVED, STREAMERS FROM A PINATA, AND THERE WITH HIS GLORIOUS SMILE, HER FAVORITE UNCLE THERE WITH HER TO THE END.

WE SEE ALL THIS ILLUSTRATED AS WELL. THE SKY WITH COLORFUL BIRDS FLYING AND FILLING IT WITH THE COLORS. CREATING PATTERNS AND IMAGES EVEN. HER UNCLE LEADING HER THROUGH THE SAGUEROS, AND SHE FOLLOWING ALONG FEELING SAFE.

Vo: BECAUSE WHEN YOU PERISH OF THIRST YOU HALUCINATE THINGS. THATS JUST A FACT.

VO: AND MAYBE WHAT WAS SHE REACHING FOR THAT LAST MOMENT. PERHAPS IT WAS HER UNCLES HAND AS SHE SLOWLY, EVER SO SLOWLY SLIPS AWAY.

WE SEE THIS SCENE AS THE ANGEL IS DYING REACHING FOR HER UNCLE IS REACHING BACK BUT CAN'T QUITE GET TO HER.

SUNRISE DAY THREE:

THAT'S WHAT WE READ ON THE LARGE BLOCK TEXT ON THE SCREEN. OUR ANGEL, WINGS MORE TATTERED THAN EVER, ARE BENT A BIT, AS THE ANGE WAKES UP AND WELCOMES THE SUN AS IT COMES BACK AROUND.

HER EYES ARE SLOWER NOW TO OPEN. HER LIPS HAVE GONE DRY AND CRACKED FROM DEHYDRATION. AS SHE GETS UP WE SEE TEXT THAT COMES ON THE SCREEN WITH POINTERS TO WHAT THE TEXT IS REFERING TO. THE TEXT ALSO MOVES WITH LYDIA. IT SHIFTS AND RISES AS SHE DOES.

THE TEXT THOUGH BEGINS TO TELL US THE SYMPTOMS OF DYING OF THIRST. IT'S ALMOST VERY CLINICAL THE WORDS, AND THEY SHIFT AND MOVE WITH LYDIA, EVEN THE PLAIN THE TEXT IS ON SHIFTS BUT CLEANLY AND SMOOTHLY SO WE CAN READ IT.

VO: (AS IF READING THE ANIMATED TEXT). A CHILD'S BODY IS 60% WATER, LYDIA WAS LOSING WATER AT MORE THAN A QUART AND A HALF DAY. CELLS SHRINK. BRAIN CELLS ESPECIALLY DO NOT FUNCTION WELL WHILE SHRINKING. BLOOD CELLS CONNECTED TO THE CRANIUM WILL PULL AWAY AND RUPTURE.

VO: WITHOUT WATER THE KIDNEYS WILL BEGIN TO FAIL FIRST. THE BODY WILL BECOME TOXIC WITH WASTE MATERIALS FLOWING INTO THE BLOOD STREAM. DELIRIUM AND EXTREME HALUCINATIONS WILL BE THE LAST EXPERIENCE OF THE CHILD BEFORE SHE PERISHES.

LYDIA BEGINS TO TEAR AT HER ANGELS WARDROBE. SHE TRIES TO RIP THE WINGS FROM HER BODY, THE WHITE LINEN BUT NOTHING WORKS.

WE NOW SEE HER STANDING AGAIN LIKE SHE WAS AT THE BEGINNING IN THE DRY LAKE BED ONLY NOW OUR ANGEL IS VISIBLE WORN AND TATTERED AND WEAK, AS EVERY MOVEMENT OF HER, EVEN HER EYES BLINKING FEELS LABOURED.

SHE KEEPS WALKING THOUGH BRAVE STEP AFTER BRAVE STEP. AS SHE GETS TO THE EDGE OF THE LAKE BED, SHE BEGINS TO STUMBLE AND THEN JUST FALLS INTO THE DIRT. SHE DOESN'T EVEN PUT HER ARMS OUT TO BRACE HERSELF. SHE SLOWLY DIES WHILE REACHING FOR HER UNCLE'S HAND. AND WE SEE HER UNCLE AS WELL REACHING BACK WITH SOME SORT OF KIND ASSURANCE. AND SHE DIES.

AND THEN A STRANGE OCCURRENCE HAPPENS BUT AS SHE LAYS THERE DEAD THE WHITE MAKE UP AND THE WHITE IN HER HAIR, AND ON HER HANDS AND EVEN THE WINGS AND THE WHITE LINEN SLOWLY START TO ALMOST DISSOLVE IN THE HOT SUN UNTIL THE GIRL LAYING IS THE ACTUAL LYDIA RAMIREZ, HER SKIN DRY AND HER EYES OPEN, DEAD, AND QUICKLY DRYING. AND SLOWLY LYDIA DISAPPEARS UNTIL ALL THAT IS LEFT IS WHAT THE BORDER PATROL FOUND OF HER.

UNDERNEATH ALL THIS WE HEAR OUR NARRATOR'S VOICE.

VO: AND SO IS THE STORY OF A GIRL LOST ON OUR BORDER, LEAVING A LIFE OF PERIL TO LIVE A DREAM OF A BETTER PROMISE.

AND HERE WE REVISIT THE PORTRAITS OF YOUNG CHILDREN AGAIN, OF EVERY RACE AND CREED AND COLOR. ALL STARING INTO THE CAMERA STERN AND WITH CONVICTION. WE END ON A PORTRAIT OF A LIVING LYDIA RAMIREZ, THE GIRL WHO PLAYS THE ROLE STARING IN OUR CAMERA AS WE SLOWLY MOVE IN TOWARDS HER.

VO: THE BONES OF LYDIA RAMIREZ WERE FOUND IN 2015. SINCE THEN IT IS ESTIMATED THAT OVER 70 CHILDREN HAVE DIED OF HYPOTHERMIA, DROWNING, OR THIRST ON OUR BORDER, AN ADDITIONAL 7 CHILDREN IN 2019 DIED IN US BORDER PATROL CUSTODY.

WITH THE BONES OF LYDIA BEFORE US WE FADE TO BLACK.

WHITE TEXT APPEARS

LETS RE-DEFINE THE AMERICAN DREAM

SO THAT NO CHILD SHALL PERISH WITH UNBEARABLE SUFFERING ON OUR BORDER. LET US END THE HARVESTING OF CHILDREN FOR SEX TRAFFICKING AND ORGAN TRADE ON OUR BORDER.

LET'S END THE INDIGNATION OF IMMIGRANTS DETAINED ON OUR BORDER AND TREAT EVERYONE WITH THE DIGNITY WE ALL DESERVE. LET'S HOLD OUR VALUES TRUE THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL, THAT WE ARE ALL ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN UNALIENABLE RIGHTS, THAT AMONG THESE ARE LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS. t

LET'S BRING AN END TO THE EXPLOITATION OF ALL PEOPLE ON EARTH SO WE MIGHT FIND A WAY FOR MANKING TO SURVIVE.

CINEMA CARTEL STANDS IN TRIBUTE FOR LYDIA RAMIREZ WHO DIED UNACCOUNTED FOR ON OUR AMERICAN BORDER.