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# Men with Guns

By John Sayles

This will burn fast.  
Use it only to start the flame.  
Then this will last the morning.  
Tell me more about the man.  
He has trouble breathing.  
Sometimes he fights to swallow air.  
He can put his hand on you  
and tell what your sickness is.  
By magic?  
By science.  
He's a doctor who lives in the city.  
Can he cure you of worms?  
City people don't get sick  
the way we do.  
They speak a different language,  
they wear different clothes.  
They don't look like us.  
The people...  
The common people love drama.  
That's true.  
They watch soap operas.  
That's why you can't believe  
any of these rumors.  
How is it?  
It doesn't seem to have changed.  
- It isn't bigger?  
- It isn't smaller, either.  
We'll have to watch it.  
What a thought, watching my ass.  
The Reds make up these stories  
and the people believe them.  
It makes our job even harder.  
You can get dressed.  
Thanks.  
I was sorry to hear about your wife.  
Thank you.  
There was nothing we could do.  
Think you'll retire soon?  
I don't know.  
My vacation starts tomorrow.  
- I'll have time to think.  
- Going to the beach?  
I want to try somewhere new.  
Without Isabel...

- Maybe the mountains.

- The mountains?

My Tigers spend half their time...

...chasing guerrillas

in those fucking mountains.

I thought you'd wiped them out,

that the guerrillas were only a rumor.

It only takes a few of those bastards

to make trouble.

What can you do in the mountains?

So tell me, my condition...?

It's confidential. As always.

- It could be used against me.

- Who'd want to give you trouble?

You're like a child, Humberto.

The world is a savage place.

Very nice of you.

- Here you go.

- Thank you.

That's why people like the beach.

They forget their problems.

And you, alone, without Mommy...

I've been thinking about my students

in the program.

Daddy trained doctors

for the government.

- Ambassadors of health.

- I remember that.

The foreigners who made war

on tapeworms.

The Alliance for Progress.

Why don't they cure

their own Indians?

- Raul.

- What?

The government had to accept

their aid to shut the gringos up.

That might be true, but the program

was a good idea.

You should be very proud, Daddy.

I want to visit my students.

- In the countryside?

- Lf they're still there.

- Why wouldn't they be?

- It's been what, two years?  
- Three.  
- Three years with the Indians!  
My idea of hell.  
It isn't a punishment.  
Doctor, how many of your patients  
are Indians?  
My family has been living with them  
at our ranch for centuries.  
The more you do for them  
or give them, the lazier they get.  
Giving them a taste of modern things.  
Ideas, medicine, television...  
...you just destroy their souls.  
The program was a good idea!  
A good idea!  
It's my legacy.  
Have your students written to you?  
No, they haven't, but...  
Maybe the beach,  
but in a smaller hotel.  
My kidneys are bothering me too.  
Whenever I drink red wine,  
I get a pain right here.  
The more expensive the wine,  
the sharper the pain.  
How awful!  
- Good afternoon, doctor!  
- Good afternoon.  
The doctor doesn't look so good.  
Out With the Government!!  
In a struggle against death...  
...any advantage in technology,  
no matter how small...  
...can win the battle.  
Corts won an empire  
with a few men...  
...but he had horses and guns,  
and his adversaries didn't.  
Where you're going...  
...your main enemies  
will be bacteria and ignorance.  
Bacteria can be fought with drugs.  
But their ally, ignorance,

nobody is immune to this disease.  
To be more specific...  
...we expect you not only to apply  
your medical knowledge...  
It was an excellent idea.  
Bravo! Hey!  
Wait!  
Bravo!  
Wait!  
Don't you recognize me?  
What do you want with me?  
- Why aren't you in the village?  
- The program is finished.  
- That's not true.  
- It's finished for me.  
You were trained.  
You accepted the responsibility.  
Dozens of students who applied  
weren't as lucky as you.  
Yes, I was lucky.  
Luckier than Cienfuegos.  
- What happened to Cienfuegos?  
- What do you think?  
I have no idea.  
- He didn't get a warning.  
- Warning of what?  
You don't know a thing about it,  
do you?  
What are you doing in Los Perdidos?  
This is a pharmacy.  
We sell drugs at popular prices.  
So your classes  
weren't a complete waste.  
I sent you with medicine, training,  
the support of the government.  
Dr. Fuentes, you're the most  
learned man I ever met.  
But also the most ignorant.  
Go find Cienfuegos.  
He's got the whole story.  
You'd better go home, doctor.  
Los Perdidos is no place to be  
at night.  
Angela called me last night.

Did you change your plans?  
It was a shock.  
Bravo was one of my best students.  
He got some Indian girl pregnant  
and had to run to save his ass.  
Can I use the Mercedes  
until you're back?  
Hello.  
What town are you from?  
From here.  
This place must have a name.  
What's it called?  
We're salt people.  
This is where we live.  
- But there's nothing here.  
- You can't see anything from a car.  
It was like a hub here.  
Like Chicago or Atlanta.  
- They cut paths through the jungle?  
- There's no jungle to cut through.  
It was all farmland back then.  
Overpopulated and overfarmed.  
See if this guy knows.  
Excuse me, sir.  
Please, could you tell us...  
...do you know how far it is  
to the ruins in Jobal?  
I'm not sure.  
I've never traveled here before.  
Thank you.  
I think he said he  
doesn't know this area.  
Well, at least he speaks Spanish.  
When we speak to the Indians...  
...they don't understand Spanish.  
I don't think the Indians  
in the United States speak English.  
He says, "Do all our Indians  
speak English?"  
I think all of them do.  
I think there's a law.  
Isn't there a law?  
Ask him if he's  
heard of any atrocities.

No, I'm not gonna ask him that.

You ask him that.

- Lf we're going up there, ask him.

- Ask him. Go ahead.

Are there...?

That's right, isn't it? Thank you.

Are there...?

That's right, isn't it?

Are there "atrocidades" here?

- "Atrocidades."

- My husband wants to know...

...whether you've read about...

...any problems in this area?

Political problems.

Tell him about the book we have with  
the people with their hands cut off.

- Hands kite.

- Cut.

- Yes?

- Cut.

Cut.

No, no. That happens in  
other countries. Not here.

Not here?

Everything isn't perfect here...

...but you shouldn't believe  
all the stories.

There are stories in New York...

...about murders...

...in the newspapers.

Newspapers are businesses.

And you know the common people  
love drama.

That's true.

He says the common people  
love drama.

Ask him why they  
don't have fajitas here.

Why...

...no...?

What's the word for "fajitas"?

Seor, is the town of Rio Seco  
near here?

How do you get there?

Seora, excuse me...  
...do you know where  
Dr. Cienfuegos lives?  
The doctor here.  
He's called Cienfuegos.  
Isn't this Rio Seco?  
Seora!  
Hey, listen to me, please...  
Seora, excuse me.  
Seores, do you know  
Dr. Cienfuegos?  
Hey, there.  
This is Rio Seco, right?  
Where does Dr. Cienfuegos live?  
It's like nobody here speaks Spanish.  
Who's that? Who's out there?  
Seora, is this Rio Seco?  
Of course it is. Are you blind?  
I've never been here before.  
Nobody wants to talk to me.  
We're just poor sugar people here.  
Almost nobody comes here.  
Who are you?  
- I'm Dr. Fuentes.  
- That's good, a doctor.  
We need a doctor,  
because the one we had died.  
Died?  
How?  
- They killed him.  
- Who killed him?  
Those men. The men with guns.  
You saw this?  
- I'm blind, can't you see that?  
- I'm sorry.  
But I know everything  
that happens here.  
They made everyone witness,  
even me.  
The doctor and three others,  
out there.  
Somebody shot them?  
No. They burned them with gasoline.  
I smelled it.



First the gasoline, then the fire,  
and then the men.

They cooked them all.

Why?

Because they had guns and we didn't.

But why Cienfuegos? Why the doctor?

- They didn't like him.

- But why?

"Why, why, why?"

You talk like a parrot.

Are you the only one

who speaks Spanish?

- Then why won't anyone talk to me?

- They don't know you.

But you're talking to me.

It doesn't matter if I die.

They've killed all my children.

- Who killed them?

- The men with guns.

But who are these men?

Are they white or Indian?

When an Indian puts on a uniform,  
he becomes white.

You'd better go now, doctor.

What's wrong?

The people here don't know you.

I taught your doctor.

His name was Cienfuegos.

He was a good student.

Cienfuegos wasn't a good doctor.

- Why do you say that?

- So many of his patients are dead.

My camera!

Damn it!

Thousands of them. Tore their hearts  
out and threw them in the well.

Must have had a labor surplus.

Hello! We meet again!

The accounts say there was a stream  
of blood running down the pyramid.

In Mexico.

Pardon?

Not here. In Mexico. The Aztecs.

But it says here...

Not our people.  
It was other tribes  
attacking from the north.  
Honey, he said it was  
foreigners invading from the north.  
That's not what it says in the book.  
- I found this in the lobby.  
- Read it.  
It's written in italics.  
You read it poetically.  
There is a place where the air  
Is like a caress  
Where gentle waters flow  
A place where your burdens  
Are lifted from your shoulders  
On wings of peace  
They can't be talking about this place.  
This is near Bali.  
A place to forget  
A place to grow  
A place where each day is a gift  
And each person is reborn  
Where is this paradise on earth?  
This heaven, this safe harbor?  
They murdered Cienfuegos.  
Who told you that?  
I heard a rumor in the capital,  
so I went to the village.  
He wasn't there.  
The guerrillas kidnapped him.  
They told me  
he was burned to death.  
What is your name, sir?  
Dr. Fuentes. Humberto Fuentes.  
Dr. Humberto Fuentes.  
I'll send somebody to investigate.  
We have to stop these rumors.  
That won't change anything.  
If the guerrillas kidnapped him,  
killed him, then...  
Then you'll be returning to the capital?  
I'd like to keep on, visit another  
student of mine in Tierra Quemada.  
I wouldn't advise you to go there.

Why not?

There have been some incidents  
with guerrillas up there.

And then there are deserters,  
bandits and the Indians...

Well, they're Indians, right?

They won't talk to anybody.

A white face comes along, and...

I'm sure my student is there.

If you want to, go ahead,  
but I can't guarantee your safety.

Could I see your identification?

I need to make sure you're a doctor,  
not a journalist.

We've had problems with journalists  
up there.

They go up to take pictures,  
then they disappear.

And I get blamed for it.

I won't take any pictures.

They stole my camera.

Your identification, please.

Hey, old man!

Are you lost?!

Excuse me, seora...

...do you know

where Dr. Arenas is?

The doctor here.

Do you know him, seora?

Dr. Arenas.

Nobody knows

where Dr. Arenas is?

Dr. Arenas. Don't you know him?

Seoras, don't you know if he's here?

She isn't sick.

This is malnutrition and thirst.

Food.

What do you feed her?

She's too big  
for breast-feeding.

She needs solid food, like corn.

You understand?

There's no corn. Only coffee.

- What do you eat?

- Nothing.

I don't have food, only medicine.

Your daughter needs food.

Vegetables, fruit, rice.

These are coffee people.

They pick coffee to buy food.

Okay, so buy food.

They say the coffee price is bad.

So the pay is too low to buy food.

This village is fucked.

Where is the doctor?

- The other doctor, Dr. Arenas?

- He's gone.

Gone where?

They took him.

- Who took him?

- The army.

- Where to?

- To the school.

- Is he still there?

- They said they were taking him there.

Where is the school?

Look, we're here.

- Here?

- No, here.

- Really?

- Yes. Where's the school?

Is there a road that leads there?

I'll show you for 2 reals.

Fine.

Tell your mother you're coming with me.

- I don't have a mother.

- Then your father.

I don't have one.

He doesn't have anyone.

What's wrong?

I'm hungry.

I'm as fucked as the rest of them.

That woman needed food.

That's who I should be feeding.

She didn't have anything to sell.

- Here.

- What?

Stop here.

The school is here?

No, but it's where the doctor is.

Show me.

My 2 reals first.

These are people.

- Human beings.

- Not anymore.

What are they doing here?

This is where they take you

when you graduate.

Why were they killed?

Because the army was mad at them.

They didn't even bury them.

To make an example.

Example of what?

That it's a bad idea to get the army  
mad at you.

Why did they kill Dr. Arenas?

- He was a doctor.

- I know that, but why kill him?

Because he was a doctor.

- Was he a good doctor?

- Yes. He fixed my broken wrist.

- Did the village people like him?

- No.

- Why not?

- He wasn't one of them.

People should know about this.

Everybody knows.

The army brought us to see

what could happen to us.

I didn't know anything about it.

Because you're a stranger.

I'll take you back.

You're going home?

I don't know.

I may go to Caras Sucias.

You'll get lost.

I know how to find it.

You can't come with me.

- Where will you sleep?

- In a hotel.

- There aren't any hotels out here.

- And in your village.  
They might kill you.  
Who?  
The men who are hiding.  
When you came there was a signal...  
...and all the men went into hiding.  
Now they know you're alone,  
so they might kill you.  
I haven't done anything to them.  
So what? You're a stranger.  
I know where we can sleep.  
This was the school.  
But after the teacher disappeared...  
...the army brought people here  
to ask all the questions.  
They'd scare people by saying,  
"We'll take you to school."  
If you survived, people said you  
were educated.  
If you didn't, they said you  
had graduated.  
How do you know all this?  
They brought me here with three girls.  
The girls washed their clothes...  
...cooked for them  
and did it with them.  
And I did all the other work.  
Were they prostitutes?  
The soldiers called them whores,  
but they didn't pay them.  
- Were they white men?  
- All the soldiers were Indians.  
But the commander acted  
like he was white.  
- From where?  
- Not from here.  
They never send you  
to your own region.  
I slept here.  
What are these for?  
For the operations.  
- They had a doctor?  
- No.  
They took your friend's tools

after his "education"...

...and used them to make people talk.

They call that "operations."

The soldiers were always making jokes.

They used one of these.

Don't touch that!

If you want to go to Caras Sucias tomorrow, we should start early.

There isn't a path.

How can there be a village if there isn't a path?

They don't want to be found.

The guys said they'd take me along as a mascot...

...but the commander said no.

I'll wake you up at sunrise.

The boy has no mother.

His mother is alive, but she won't look at him.

How can that be?

She was only a girl herself when soldiers came and forced her.

The boy is something she pushed from her body.

Use your fingertips.

How can he live?

Like a dog lives. He takes the scraps that real people leave.

So he's bad.

Dogs can't be bad or good.

They're just dogs.

There's nobody left.

These were banana people.

They hid in the trees...

...but during the festival they got caught in the open...

...and were gunned down from a helicopter.

The survivors were taken away.

Why didn't you tell me?

You didn't ask if there were people here.

Do you know what happened

to the doctor here? Echevarra?  
Okay, now I'll take you back.  
They don't want me there.  
- They say I'm bad luck.  
- They're right.  
You know how to find the main road?  
You know where Los Mrtires is?  
It's higher up.  
Were you ever there?  
Were you?  
Damn it! This fucking country!  
Hey, old geezer,  
what are you doing here?  
- Don't block the road!  
- So long, buddy!  
Assholes!  
Seor, have you seen anyone  
with my tires?  
Where are you coming from?  
Watch it, mister. He's a soldier.  
Do you speak Spanish?  
Did you see somebody with tires?  
From my car?  
I don't know anything about  
your fucking tires.  
How much money have you got?  
Give me your money  
or I'll break his arm.  
- He isn't mine.  
- So what?  
- I've only got 2 reals.  
- Give them to me.  
And you?  
At least give me back my tires.  
How could I have your tires?  
Somebody with a jack took them.  
Give me the keys.  
What are you doing out here?  
Visiting a friend.  
- Where?  
- He works in Pico de Aguila.  
You can't reach that village by car.  
Some soldier.  
If there's a battle and a soldier



loses his rifle...  
...the captain says he's a spy,  
and the soldier is executed.  
That's stupid.  
They've got discipline.  
When I was their mascot  
I saw it lots of times.  
That probably happened to the man  
who took my money.  
Two reals!  
I had hundreds in my wallet.  
- Do you have a house in the capital?  
- Yes.  
And you have more money there?  
It's in the bank.  
Then what are you crying about?  
He took everything I had in the world.  
- Nobody drives on this road.  
- Nobody but idiots.  
Somebody's coming.  
Then it must be some idiot.  
Run, kid!  
Are you hurt?  
Put these tires onto your car.  
Where did you get it?  
I said run!  
Hurry up!  
There's a jack in the trunk.  
Tourists.  
Tourists always have flashlights.  
Point it at the tires.  
What are you doing?  
Tell me what you're doing!  
The bullet went through your arm  
and lodged in your ribs.  
I have to give you a shot.  
- Don't knock me out.  
- You can't take the pain.  
Just do it.  
You don't have much experience  
with bullets.  
My patients aren't thieves.  
The boy said you're a deserter.  
I was a medic in the army.

If they stop us, say I'm your driver  
and that a snake bit me.  
What?  
Say I was peeing by the side  
of the road, and a snake bit me.  
Where are we going?  
Further on.  
You'll drive.  
Give me a shot for the pain now...  
...but not enough to knock me out.  
What's that?  
I can't read the label.  
It's an analgesic.  
Can you read?  
You have to trust me.  
- What is it exactly?  
- You have to trust me.  
- Your pants.  
- He's just a boy!  
I'll give him half a dose  
and see what it does.  
Drop your pants!  
First give me my 2 reals back.  
When we get where I'm going.  
What?  
Where are we going?  
Further ahead.  
Let's go.  
Did you kill the tourists?  
- Who?  
- The ones whose tires you took.  
Did you kill them?  
Why not?  
What do you care?  
Who shot you?  
It doesn't matter.  
What did he say?  
He says he's never been  
in an airplane before.  
He won't run away.  
Am I going to die from this?  
Not if you get treatment.  
Then you'll get to live a little longer.  
If you want to get better,

you need to sleep.  
You first.  
Keep moving, damn it!  
I told you not to go here!  
There's no way around this town.  
- What are you doing?  
- We need food and water.  
Bring the money.  
Where did you get these things?  
Where are these from? Ask him.  
From the city.  
And he got this from the city too?  
Ask him what it is.  
He doesn't know.  
Does he know what any of these are?  
He says they're for a doctor.  
He'll give them to you for a good price.  
Where's the doctor's office?  
Dr. De Soto's office.  
He says there is no doctor.  
Tell him I know these are stolen.  
If he won't say where Dr.  
De Soto is, I'll tell the police.  
At the end of that street.  
But he says the doctor's not there.  
We'll see about that.  
Where are you going?  
Good afternoon.  
Good afternoon.  
Is the doctor in?  
This is Dr. De Soto's office?  
It was.  
- He's not here anymore?  
- The doctor passed away.  
Do you mind if I sit?  
No, please. Sit down.  
Could you tell me how he died?  
It was very unfortunate.  
The guerrillas murdered him.  
Guerrillas came to this town?  
How can you stop them?  
When the army isn't here, they come.  
They come to shop and visit friends.  
What did they have against

Dr. De Soto?  
He treated wounded soldiers  
when the army came.  
Then the guerrillas came back...  
...and punished the people  
who had helped the army.  
What if he had refused to treat  
the soldiers?  
Nobody refuses the men with guns.  
They killed him to make an example.  
So now you don't have a doctor.  
It seems simpler that way.  
Well?  
Would you like a haircut?  
Does it hurt?  
Yes.  
A lot?  
Shut up.  
Did you get them?  
Look, kid, here they are.  
The Father, the Son  
and the Holy Ghost.  
Let's go.  
Fine.  
I'm not kidding.  
Of course you're not.  
The rich use the army to push  
the Indians off the good land...  
...so they'll starve to death.  
So the Indians go pick their coffee.  
And they come back  
with their pitiful wages...  
...and those leeches suck them dry.  
Don't stop.  
I'm warning you.  
Go ahead, shoot.  
If the army or police see you alone  
in the car...  
...they'll arrest you in a minute.  
Hello.  
- Hello.  
- Where are you headed?  
Further on.  
Are you lost?

Yes. For a long time now.  
Where do you live?  
Neither here nor there.  
What's your name?  
Padre Portillo.  
But now people just call me  
"The Ghost."  
You're a priest?  
Not anymore.  
I was when I came here.  
I taught religion to the Indians...  
...through theater. People love drama.  
But I was a bad actor.  
I stopped believing in my role,  
and lost my faith.  
That's a shame.  
A man should believe in something.  
Are you religious?  
No. I'm a doctor. A scientist.  
I only believe in progress.  
- Always moving ahead.  
- That's it.  
These days I just believe in moving.  
Never mind which direction.  
I have to admit my faith has been  
shaken in the last few days.  
I'm sorry for you.  
So you got a village girl pregnant.  
Oh, no.  
Much worse than that.  
You stole from the church.  
There was nothing to steal.  
I was a very good priest...  
...until I was tested.  
Tested?  
I was tested, and I was weak.  
A priest without faith is like a soldier  
without a rifle.  
You can never save a life.  
You can make it longer,  
make it better...  
...relieve pain...  
...but in the end everyone dies.  
I wanted to leave something

in the world, something...  
Eternal?  
Something practical.  
Something to be passed on  
from person to person.  
I wanted to save souls, but  
how much better to save a life.  
I dreamed your life  
and you dreamed mine.  
And we both ended up...  
...a total failure.  
You can't feel responsible  
for those students.  
The world is a hard place.  
I should have warned them.  
If you didn't know what the danger  
was, how could you warn them?  
I should have known.  
Maybe.  
Maybe innocence is a sin.  
Your driver doesn't like me.  
He's not my driver.  
He's just somebody heading  
in the same direction.  
How far are you going?  
Until I find my students.  
You can stay with us tonight,  
but in the morning you leave.  
May God bless you.  
Where are you going?  
To relieve myself,  
if it's all right with you.  
Watch out for snakes.  
Welcome.  
We don't get many visitors here.  
Where are you from?  
Gum people go wherever the sap  
is running.  
But where were you born?  
On the coast.  
In the mountains.  
But we live wherever the work is.  
Do you know any stories?  
Stories?

We don't get television out here.  
People come to places like this  
to get away from television.  
It's good to have a story at night.  
If you talk loud enough,  
you can't hear the mosquitoes.  
I'll tell you a story.  
A true story?  
It's a ghost story.  
There once was a priest...  
...who came to a mountain village  
to teach the Bible.  
He used theater...  
...and put on plays with the children  
to bring the holy word.  
But...  
...it was the time when the army  
was mad at the people.  
Because the priest helped  
the people...  
...he became their enemy too.  
Before the killing began...  
...there were threats.  
Anonymous notes...  
...things painted on the church.  
But the people begged him not to go.  
They thought that if he stayed,  
God would protect them.  
The army burned Los Sueos,  
which was above the village...  
...but the people there  
had all become Baptists.  
Then they burned El Chino,  
which was below the village.  
In El Chino everyone was Catholic.  
But nothing bad or unusual  
happened in the priest's village.  
They were corn people...  
... working the land...  
... having children  
and trying to feed them.  
Nobody was interested in politics.  
So when the army came...  
... their only thought was to hide.

The comandante  
left us this list of five men.  
Five men and our Padre.  
These are men he says  
we must execute.  
- What have they done?  
- He says they are subversives.  
He says they help the guerrillas.  
That isn't true.  
The comandante says it is.  
And he has men with guns.  
You saw them.  
Can we fight them?  
With machetes? With hoes?  
He says it's our duty to march  
the traitors to our cemetery...  
...to dig holes, to kill them and  
leave them there until he returns.  
He says if we don't do this,  
he'll know we are bad people...  
...and his soldiers will burn our village  
and kill us all...  
...like in El Chino  
and Los Sueos.  
What if we run?  
Then they'll kill us in small groups,  
instead of all together.  
We should have a vote on this.  
We have three choices.  
Try to fight and be slaughtered.  
Try to run and be slaughtered...  
...or sacrifice the men  
on the comandante's list.  
May I see the hands  
of those who wish to fight?  
And those who wish to run?  
And those who think we must do  
as the comandante tells us.  
Father? Father?  
You haven't voted.  
I'm sorry.  
I vote with the majority.  
Thank you.  
On the list are Padre Portillo...



...Isidro Mendez, Jacobo Duran...  
...Eufemio Ramirez, Sixto Lima...  
...and I, Moises Ibarra, am the sixth.  
These men have an hour  
to be with their families...  
...and then we'll all meet  
at the cemetery.  
It's best if we do this as quickly  
as possible.  
As a boy the priest read  
the histories of the martyrs...  
... as if they were comic books.  
He often imagined his heroic death  
at the hands of the infidels...  
... a golden ray of light  
lifting him to the heavens...  
... his soul resting  
at the right side of God.  
But...  
... when the reality was upon him,  
well...  
The church called the gospel  
he taught liberation theology.  
But he chose to liberate himself.  
He knew the people of the village.  
He had eaten in their homes,  
shared their work...  
... baptized their babies.  
Because he knew them so well,  
he could imagine every detail...  
... of what would happen next.  
Gonzalo, the sacristan,  
led the Catholic part of the ceremony.  
The priest's absence  
was noted by all...  
... but nobody spoke of it.  
Their only hope was that the  
comandante wouldn't blame them...  
... for his lack of faith.  
And so it went.  
They could have sent someone  
to bring him back if they wanted to.  
But they didn't.  
I suppose they had their reasons.

They waited for the comandante.  
Patience.  
The villagers clear a section  
of jungle...  
...knowing it will take seven,  
eight years for a decent yield.  
Do you know anyone  
with that kind of patience?  
What happened to the village?  
I've been to where it was.  
They were killed?  
I obviously don't believe in heaven,  
doctor.  
But hell...  
...I can give you a tour of hell.  
And the priest?  
I told you it was a ghost story.  
The priest wanders the roads  
and pathways of the country...  
...never sleeping in the same place.  
He is neither here nor there.  
A ghost.  
I'd hate to meet a ghost like that.  
What would you do  
in the same situation?  
If it was me?  
Who knows?  
I'm not a priest.  
Priests are not regular people.  
They're not supposed to be.  
Could you hear my confession?  
I'm not a priest anymore.  
I don't wear a cassock, see?  
I was a soldier...  
...but now I don't wear a uniform.  
Does that mean I haven't  
killed anyone?  
Killing the enemy in battle  
isn't the same as murder.  
It's been a long time  
since my last confession.  
Bless me, Father...  
...for I have sinned.  
Do it! Give it to him!

Don't be a faggot!  
Give it to him!  
Hurry up! Kill him!  
That was only the first.  
It was my initiation.  
I'm not a priest.  
I can't absolve you.  
Then what good are you?  
I ought to kill you.  
As you wish.  
Father...  
...tell me...  
...are sins only things that you do?  
Or can they be things that you  
don't do?  
There are sins of commission  
and sins of omission.  
And then there's original sin.  
We're all born guilty in the eyes  
of the Lord.  
What if a man has hurt someone  
without wanting to...  
...with no intention?  
He's probably not a sinner.  
But he's an idiot for sure.  
Of course. An idiot or a coward.  
But if God kept such people  
out of heaven...  
...he'd be very lonely.  
Oh, shit!  
Oh, shit!  
- Pass them!  
- It's too narrow.  
- Pass them!  
- What's the hurry?  
You, shut up!  
As you wish.  
Hang on.  
What a ride!  
Are you happy now?  
Shit!  
Shit!  
Careful what you say, doctor.  
Your identification.

- Dr. Fuentes?

- That's right.

And the others?

This is his driver and his son.

And you?

A ghost.

The doctor was kind enough to  
pick me up in the middle of nowhere.

Come with me.

I absolve you.

Stop when you reach the camp.

Why did he do that?

He's crazy.

And he's a lousy priest.

Modelo

COMMUNITY OF HOPE

They bring people here  
after they burn their villages.

Why?

To protect them.

Protect them? From what?

From the guerrillas.

They're afraid of the guerrillas?

They're country people.

They're afraid of everything.

The army thinks they'll

help the guerrillas...

...if they don't watch them all the time.

Our doctor comes only

every three months.

Wasn't there a doctor in

Pico de Aguila before you got here?

Dr. Hidalgo?

He was executed.

Almost a year ago.

Why?

For helping the guerrillas.

You're sure of that?

Why else would an educated man  
live out here?

Maybe he just wanted to help  
the Indians.

It's the same thing.

How come your driver wasn't driving?

A snake bit him.  
He took a leak in the bushes,  
and a snake bit him.  
That'll teach him to hold his water.  
It's further up in the jungle.  
They call it Cerca del Cielo.  
Fairy tales.  
Everybody says it's true.  
Has anybody ever come back  
from there?  
Why would anyone want to  
come back to Modelo?  
You should be resting.  
If that priest sings, I'm fucked.  
Help me with these people.  
Ask what their problems are.  
I don't understand this dialect.  
- She's got ulcers.  
- What color?  
- White.  
- It's a virus.  
You treat it with this.  
Three pills a day for two weeks.  
How many years were you  
in the army?  
Two.  
We treated skin rashes, dysentery...  
...now and then gunshot wounds.  
You operated?  
Only if there was no doctor there.  
Sometimes they died,  
sometimes they didn't.  
We never had much medicine.  
The officers were selling it.  
I got the whole story.  
These people are from  
Pico de Aguila.  
They brought them here  
and then burned their town.  
Your friend, Dr. Hidalgo,  
is dead.  
The sergeant told me.  
The people say there's a village  
further on.

It's so high and hidden  
that the army can't find it.  
They call it Cerca del Cielo.  
There's always rumors like that.  
They say the refugees from the  
burnt villages are hiding up there.  
And a young woman doctor  
lives there.  
A doctor named...  
Montoya?  
Yes. That's it.  
She's the last one.  
Come forward.  
Come closer.  
Ask what her problem is.  
You.  
The old woman says  
this girl's stomach hurts.  
Since when?  
Since they raped her.  
She hasn't spoken a word  
since that day.  
- When was that?  
- Two years ago.  
The problem is in her head.  
- Give her a pill.  
- I can't cure imaginary diseases.  
I'm not a psychologist.  
Take these.  
May God bless you.  
If you want to come it has to be now.  
You'd better head back to the capital.  
We heard there are guerrillas  
operating around here.  
They stole some tourist's car.  
What happened to the man  
who was with us?  
You shouldn't pick up strangers.  
Get going.  
Why didn't you turn me in?  
I should have.  
I'm a bad citizen.  
You won't find her.  
There's nothing up there.

Go around her.  
What are you doing here?  
She wants to go to Cerca del Cielo.  
We don't know where it is.  
So?  
We should be charging bus fare.  
You'll be warmer if you  
come near the fire.  
She's afraid of us.  
Then why'd she come?  
She's more afraid of the soldiers  
at Modelo.  
So this is what's left of Pico.  
I think Pico is behind us now.  
This is some other place.  
Another place where everybody  
is dead.  
Or gone to Cerca del Cielo.  
There is no such place.  
How do you know?  
When I was in the army  
they talked about this place.  
But we never found it.  
So it's really well-hidden.  
We never found it  
because it doesn't exist.  
We even searched with helicopters.  
If people had cleared land to plant...  
...we'd have seen it from above.  
If they haven't cleared land...  
...they'd have starved to death.  
Just because you haven't seen it  
doesn't mean it's not there.  
You can believe in heaven  
if you want, kid.  
See where it gets you.  
So why are you coming with us?  
Where else can I go?  
Seorita...  
...if you shoot yourself,  
you'll wake up the others.  
If you want to, go ahead...  
...but it seems a waste when we're  
almost to Cerca del Cielo.

I know Domingo said it  
doesn't exist but he's just bitter.  
He's been disappointed so often.  
He's lost all hope.

You know...

...Cerca del Cielo  
is a very special place.  
Where the air is like a caress,  
where gentle waters flow...  
...where wings of peace lift  
the burdens from your shoulders.  
A place where you can forget.  
A place where each day is a gift  
and each person is reborn.  
And it's not far from here.  
Just a little further on.

Right.

He hates it when people play  
with his things.

Shit.

Let's go.

There's no path.

- Get her!
- Watch out!
- Grab her!
- Where is she?

Let me go!

- Let me go!
- Look for her, idiot!

Hurry up! You gotta get it  
while they're still fresh.

No! Don't do it!

Don't do it!

Keep going!

I have to rest.

Move it!

Go ahead...

...shoot.

Fuck it!

You'll get that wound infected.  
Human beings can't survive here.  
Jaguars, snakes, insects  
that eat everything in sight.  
You'd have to burn it all



and start from scratch.  
But why come here in the first place?  
To get away from white people.  
I guess that might be worth it.  
There should be somewhere  
that white people aren't allowed.  
Hello!  
Hello! Hello, seores!  
Hey, over here! How you doing?  
Good afternoon!  
It's a unique mixture of architectures.  
- You wouldn't believe.  
- It isn't clear yet...  
...if the Lotecs were a homogenous  
group, mongrelized culture.  
Most of the evidence suggests  
they were driven up here...  
...by the more dominant civilizations.  
A man stole our car at gunpoint.  
Like The Treasure  
of the Sierra Madre.  
The police found the car  
but without tires.  
Understand? Not one.  
Another theory is that this site  
was founded by runaways...  
...from different cities in the lowlands.  
Possibly...  
...people earmarked for sacrifice.  
Americans are all obsessed  
with these sacrifices.  
That's true.  
Honey, he says we're hung up  
on sacrifice.  
Well, the concept of sacrifice  
is a tough one to sell in the States.  
You know, you don't look so good,  
doctor.  
This is the tropics.  
You gotta watch yourself.  
Are you okay?  
Yeah? Fine?  
They were gone before the Spanish  
got here.

They fell apart on their own.  
Civil war, family feuds...  
Like Europe during the same period.  
Oh, yes, Europe.  
Europe was in much worse shape.  
Much worse.  
Europe bit the big one.  
Here at least there was...  
...some organization...  
...some pattern to the killing...  
...some meaning.  
Europe was all warlords,  
feudal disputes...  
...little ethnic conflicts.  
It is so peaceful here.  
How is it? Tranquil, right?  
Battled the jungle to carve out a living  
for themselves.  
Incas, Aztecs, Olmecs...  
...Toltecs, Zapotecs.  
And here?  
Here? Here the jungle won.  
Are you sure you'll be all right?  
Don't worry. Andrew has  
a magnificent sense of direction.  
We'll probably see you at the hotel  
in Tres Cruces.  
Yes, probably.  
I was a guide at the ruins at Xtal.  
The gringos gave me bigger tips  
if I made up bloody stories.  
I told them the priests  
ripped out the virgins' hearts...  
...and then ate them.  
It will be cold here tonight.  
I must be going crazy.  
Good evening.  
You're visiting the ruins?  
We were resting here.  
You know this man?  
I do.  
He says he escaped from Modelo,  
and the soldiers shot him.  
He says you found him on the road

and treated his wounds.  
That's true.  
Where did he get this?  
He must have stolen it.  
I wish he had stolen more  
than three bullets.  
Untie him.  
Why are you here?  
I'm looking for a friend,  
Dr. Montoya.  
I heard she fled to these mountains  
and lives with refugees.  
Dr. Montoya is at Cerca del Cielo.  
You're sure?  
The army tried to kill her,  
but she escaped and went up there.  
That's what people say.  
- Where is it?  
- We can't tell you.  
She's my friend, my student.  
We don't know where it is.  
This village, Cerca del Cielo,  
we've never seen it.  
Maybe it's just a rumor, like the story  
about Dr. Montoya.  
Whenever we look for it, we keep  
circling back and end up here.  
Is there any food left?  
Please, help yourselves.  
You people should go home.  
It's dangerous in these mountains.  
Listen...  
...do you have anything for blisters?  
- They do have it.  
- No, they don't.  
- What do you know?  
- They don't have it.  
Why should I believe you?  
Why not ask the doctor?  
He ought to know.  
Sir.  
Yes?  
You're from the city?  
That's right.

You know the ice-cream store  
near the bus station?

- I used to take my daughter there.

- What flavors do they have?

Lots of flavors.

Say what they are.

They're listed out front.

There's chocolate, vanilla, mango...

- Lots of them.

- Tell us more, all of them.

Okay. Chocolate, vanilla, mango...

...guava, coconut, guanbana,

pineapple...

...strawberry...

...banana, coffee, orange...

...let's see, hazelnut.

- And rum flavor?

- Rum and tamarind...

...and something green, like mint.

I want chocolate and coconut.

You only get one.

Why?

Because that's the rule.

How come you make the rules?

Because I've eaten ice cream  
and you haven't.

Have you fought against the army?

Sure.

We're not just fucking around up here.

We attack them and they run.

And we take whatever guns  
and ammo they leave behind.

But they never leave food.

They know if they brought food,  
we'd never leave them alone.

You two, go to sleep.

We leave before sunrise.

Sleep.

Chocolate and mango.

What do you think they'll find?

It doesn't much matter.

When people start into a story  
they have to see the end...

...or they aren't happy.

How do the tortillas look?  
Like whoever made them  
doesn't know what she's doing.  
They're here.  
I'll ask him for you.  
There's no hurry. He's come to stay.  
Welcome.  
Hello.  
You can stay if you want.  
But here we live under the trees.  
Where is the doctor?  
There is no doctor here.  
I heard she was here with you.  
Dr. Montoya.  
This is where rumors come to die.  
Good luck.  
This village is fucked.  
The sky people live here.  
They eat air and shit clouds.  
This is my legacy.  
Modelo looked better than this.  
Every man should leave a legacy...  
...something he built,  
something he left in the world.  
Someone he passed his knowledge to,  
who'll carry on for him.  
This is what I leave.  
At least...  
...I don't have to climb anymore.  
The ruins looked better than this.  
Is there any place you like?  
There must be another place.  
Somewhere...  
...even further on.  
Can I have my 2 reals back?  
It's not what you had planned  
for your vacation, is it, doctor?  
Dead.  
Really?  
He's dead.  
They'll steal this if we leave it here.  
She says she needs a doctor.  
There is no doctor.  
The doctor is dead.

There's a piece of metal  
in her mother's leg.  
She stepped on a mine that the army  
dropped from a plane.  
- She can't stand up.  
- The doctor is dead.  
I'm not a doctor.  
Okay.  
Where's your mother?