

The Crossing Guards

A cotton farmer and a nun investigate the deaths of unaccompanied minors in fields and come under attack from a neighbor.

FADE UP:

EXT. SONORA DESERT - DAY

DRONE footage moving NORTH. Desert. Nothing here but sun-scorched earth, reptiles under rocks, a little scrub.

DONNY MOREL (OS)

(over a PA)

Now, my daughter Donna June has a little song she'd like to play for you. Donna June...

A SOUR CHORD. EXCLAMATION OF A FRUSTRATED TWELVE YEAR OLD GIRL. A QUICK GUITAR TUNING.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FORTUNA GOLF COURSE - DAY

SAME CHORD, IN TUNE. She plays "THIS LAND" pretty well. She belts out a song like only a loud twelve year old girl can.

DONNA JUNE (OS)

This land is my land./ This land's not your land.

HOOTS encourage her.

Over a sand trap MOVING FORWARD. CARL WEISS (30s), blank face, JOHN DEERE CAP, ear protection, and jeans, toned and tanned hops off a tractor with a spraying rig.

DONNA JUNE (OS)

You'd better get off/ 'Fore we blow your head off.

He folds up the arms of the sprayer.

DONNA JUNE (OS)

I got a shot gun./ It ain't no pop gun.

Carl hops back on and drives off.

DONNA JUNE (OS)

This land was made for me, not you.

Her MUSIC CROSS FADES with the sound of the TRACTOR.

EXT. FORTUNA GOLF COURSE CLUB HOUSE PATIO - DAY

Carl rides by on the tractor, oblivious to the performance on the patio. The passing TRACTOR drowns out DONNA JUNE MOREL (12) and her guitar.

About THIRTY UPPER CRUST PEOPLE and a couple BLUE COLLARS listen to Donna June on a low stage. Typical bar band stand set up. She's pissed at the tractor but plays on.

DONNY MOREL (40s) stands down stage left. He's not thrilled at the interruption, either. He's quick to step up to the mic as Donna June finishes and storms off to APPLAUSE.

DONNY MOREL

Thank you, Donna June. Wasn't that nice?

EXT. FORTUNA ROAD - CONTINUOUS

From \$550,000 homes with well-tended, well-watered lawns ...

DONNY MOREL (OS)

When Mexico, and Honduras, and San Salvador send us people, you know they're not sending us their best.

... to clapboards in scrub yards and cotton fields.

EXT. ST. IGNATIUS - CONTINUOUS

Carl turns down a gravel road between a field and St. Ignatius Church and Elementary.

DONNY MOREL (OS)

They send drug dealers.

SISTER MARIA JUANITA (23) watches over students on the playground. She sees Carl and waves.

DONNY MOREL (OS)

Rapists, not their finest people. They send people they don't want.

Carl's face is still blank. He waves, though.

EXT. THE WEISS PLACE - DAY

Carl turns his tractor into a long, long drive between two cotton fields. He passes his farm house.

EXT. POLE BARN - DAY

The drive slopes down a little to a distant access road. Carl pulls up, jumps off, pulls keys out for the padlock. He opens the doors wide.

DONNY MOREL (OS)
Well, we don't want them, either.

Hopping into the seat again, Carl glances into the sky, shakes his head. He drives into the building.

DONNY MOREL (OS)
These vultures want what we have
and aren't willing to work.

ANGRY CHEERING. Carl comes out of the barn with a shovel and a wheel barrow. He walks toward a couple orange trees in the back. Two black vultures circle over a field.

The county is doing work on the access road near Carl's driveway. It's a little torn up.

Carl drops the handles of the barrow a hundred feet from the access road and a couple rows into the field from the drive. He clasps his hands and closes his eyes, muttering. Face still blank.

CARL
Amen.

He crosses himself. Out comes his cell. He dials.

ANGIE (ON PHONE)
Sheriff's office. This is Deputy
Baylor.

CARL
Angie, we got us a problem.

EXT. ST. IGNATIUS - CONTINUOUS

Maria Juanita holds up a crossing guard sign. Deputy Sheriff ANGELA BAYLOR (30s) stops her car at the intersection.

SISTER MARY ANNA (50s) leads SECOND GRADERS across the street to the HOUSING DEVELOPMENT opposite the church.

The Coroner's van pulls up behind the cop car. Maria Juanita walks to the curb, waves to Angie and CORONER EDUARDO "DR. ED" JIMENEZ (60s) as they turn onto the side road.

EXT. POLE BARN - DAY

Carl exits the pole barn as

DONNY "DJ" MOREL, JR. (17) pulls up in his DARK BLUE F-10. It's got an American flag painted on both doors. His bumper covered in TRUMP 2016, TRUMP 2024, and NRA bumper stickers.

DJ dismounts. He wears a red, white, and blue PATRIOT BOYS cap and tee. He swaggers over.

CARL

What do you want, DJ?

DJ

Your patriotism. The Patriot Boys are going to patrol the area. We're counting on your cooperation.

CARL

(not interested)

Uh-huh. Deputy Baylor has things well in hand, thanks.

DJ turns as Angie's car and the coroner's van pull up.

CARL (CONTINUED)

No playing war in my fields.

Carl jerks his head toward the access road.

CARL (CONTINUED)

You can show yourself out the back door.

DJ

It's your patriotic duty...

CARL

Get off my land, trespasser.

DJ walks backwards toward his truck. Stink eye. He slams the door, starts it up and kicks gravel on the way out.

CARL

Shit for brains.

Angie and Dr. Ed stroll up. Ed carries a black case about the size of a tackle box. She flips on her body cam.

CARL

Angie. Dr. Ed.

Dr. Ed nods.

(CONTINUED)

ANGIE

Problem?

CARL

I told him his daddy was calling
him.

(beat)

As I said, I got a two bodies. This
way.

He starts toward the back. They follow.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION ON ACCESS ROAD AT CARL'S PLACE - NIGHT

DJ sits in his DARK BLUE F-10 among the construction
machines. He wears NIGHT VISION GOGGLES in his truck cab.

CRUNCH-CRUNCH OF GRAVEL UNDER FEET. DJ sinks below the
window. Maria Juanita carries two grocery bags past his
truck. He slowly sits up.

DJ'S POV - NIGHT VISION GOGGLES

Maria Juanita wends her way on Carl's back drive. She's
wary. She stops by the closest, orange tree sapling. A DOG
BARKS. She freezes. Abides. Hesitant, she sets one of the
bags at the roots of the tree and moves on down the road.

SCENE

DJ gets out of the truck. He closes the door, but leaves it
unlatched. He skulks toward the driveway.

EXT. CARL'S BACK FIELD AND ORANGE TREES - CONTINUOUS

DJ can see the bag from the drive. He scans the area as he
walks to the sapling and looks in the bag.

Three water bottles, and a couple bags of trail mix.

DJ

That bitch.

He looks in the direction Maria Juanita went and in the
direction of the house and outbuilding. Wheels turn. He
smiles to himself and strides to his truck.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION ON ACCESS ROAD AT CARL'S PLACE -
CONTINUOUS

DJ reaches into the back of his truck. He pulls out a pair of bolt cutters.

EXT. POLE BARN - NIGHT

The sodium light over the door bathes the entrance in orange. DJ cuts the lock and pockets it. He opens the door just enough to slip inside.

INT. POLE BARN - CONTINUOUS

Light spills inside. DJ leans the bolt cutters against the workbench. He grabs the bucket under the bench.

At the back of the spraying rig he sets the bucket on the floor, pulls out a Leatherman, and uses it to loosen a feed hose fitting on an arm.

The wrench slips. He barks his knuckles.

DJ

Shit.

DJ sticks his bloodied knuckles in his mouth for a second, but returns to loosening the hose. The hose fitting leaks into the bucket. He fills the bucket half-way.

He finger tightens the fitting, grabs his bolt cutters and carries the bucket out. The fitting drips.

EXT. CARL'S BACK FIELD AND ORANGE TREES - CONTINUOUS

DJ opens the bottles and drinks about half of each. He pours from the bucket to top them off and puts the lids back on the bottles. The bottles go in the bag against the sapling.

DJ moves on with the bucket.

EXT. POLE BARN - DAY

The Sodium light winks out. RED-ORANGE early morning sunlight replaces it. Carl saunters up to the cracked door.

Notes the door, scans the ground. Opens the door slowly.

INT. POLE BARN - CONTINUOUS

Phone comes out. He dials. Notes the slow drip and the puddle in the floor. Where's the bucket? He puts the trash can under the drip instead.

DEPUTY GARCIA (ON PHONE)
Sheriff's office. Deputy Garcia.

CARL
Geraldo, it's Weiss. I had a break in last night. Some one messed with my rig.

DEPUTY GARCIA (ON PHONE)
It's shift change. Some one will be out in 30 to 45.

CARL
Thanks.

EXT. POLE BARN - CONTINUOUS

Carl scans everything around the entrance for the lock.

CARL
Need a better lock.

Movement by the orange trees. He heads that way.

He tears down the sloping drive to the orange trees. The Unmistakable sound of a CHILD PUKING.

EXT. CARL'S BACK FIELD AND ORANGE TREES - CONTINUOUS

Water bottles under the trees. Trail mix and vomit. TRISTESSA (10) shakes on all fours. Dry heaves, drops.

XURXO (2) lies on his back. Vomit in his hair. Not moving. Tristessa's having a Grand Mal seizure.

CARL
Merciful Father.

Carl rolls his handkerchief up and put it in her mouth. He holds her down with one hand and keeps the rolled handkerchief in her mouth with the other. She stops thrashing. He releases her, but keeps his hand at her mouth.

CARL
(in Spanish)
Can you keep the cloth in your mouth? Clamp hard.

(CONTINUED)

She's crying, looks terrified, but nods.

Carl reaches to feel Xurxo's throat for a pulse. Nada.

CARL

Oh, God.

MONTAGE: QUICK SNAP SHOTS

- HOSPITAL ROOM: ROSA WEISS (26) nursing NEWBORN MIGUELA WEISS.

- CHRISTMAS: Happy Carl with MIGUELA WEISS (3) on her rocking horse.

- FORTUNA RIDING SCHOOL STABLES: Ecstatic MIGUELA WEISS (7) rides a horse in a corral.

- NEWSPAPER: MOTHER AND DAUGHTER DIE IN HEAD ON COLLISION

END MONTAGE

SCENE

Out comes the phone. He dials.

ANGIE (ON PHONE)

(groggy)

Carl, this better be good.

CARL

It's not. Two problems. I'm taking one to the hospital. No time. The other is under my orange trees.

He hangs up.

CARL (CONTINUED)

(in Spanish)

Little one, can you walk?

Another spasm. He waits until she stops, picks her up, and starts running.

EXT. CARL'S HOUSE - DAY

Carl opens the passenger door of his gray beater 1999 Silverado and loads Tristessa in the front passenger seat. Closes the door and turns.

DJ Morel in his F-10 swings too wide for the drive. His front passenger tire is in the ornamental grasses. The rest of the truck blocks the entrance to his drive with his truck.

(CONTINUED)

CARL
Move your Tonka Toy, DJ.

DJ
Where are you going? I'll take her
to ICE.

Carl rounds the front of his truck to get in.

CARL
Hospital. I'll T-bone you if you
don't move.

He gets in starts it up. Revs. No movement on DJ's part.

Revs again. No response. A RED SIERRA 1500 and a WHITE DODGE
RAM that have never seen an honest day's work pull up. BUBBA
1 (20s) and BUBBA 2 (20s) get out.

Calm Carl spins the steering wheel hard, fishtails, and
sprays gravel onto DJ's door on the way out the back way. DJ
pulls out his cell. Speed dials.

DJ
Dad, Weiss is taking one to the
hospital.

DONNY MOREL (ON PHONE)
On my way. Get back to the club.
Wait for me.

INT. CARL'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Bumpy road. Carl is on the phone. He shoots worried glances
at Tristessa. She's shaking, but weaker.

CARL
I'll be there in five.

INT. CARL'S TRUCK - LATER

On the highway, 85 miles per hour.

Maria Juanita is crying. She holds Tristessa across her lap.
Tristessa is out, asthmatic wheezing.

MARIA JUANITA
I put the food and water out.

CARL
Not your fault. I know who did it.
Where else?

Maria Juanita gasps in horror.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA JUANITA
Your neighbor to the south.

Carl downshifts for the off ramp.

EXT. SONORAN MEDICAL CENTER EMERGENCY ENTRANCE - DAY

PATRIOT BOYS [AND PATRIOT GIRLS], picket signs block the entrance. "NO FREE TREATMENT", "GO TO YOUR OWN DOCTOR", "SOCIALIZED MEDICINE? NO WAY, JOSE!", "PATRIOTS ONLY", "TRUMP 2024" A Confederate flag. A Trump flag. Ugly. They start yelling when Carl pulls up.

Scared HOSPITAL STAFF at the windows. Carl opens his door.

Carl opens the passenger door as Maria Juanita swings her legs out with Tristessa draped over her lap. La Pieta.

Carl gathers Tristessa in his arms and carries her up to the doors. Some of the crowd parts. Others stand their ground. All of them yelling obscenities. Maria Juanita follows close behind him.

Donny Morel stands between Carl and the opening and closing door.

CARL
Tell your kid to stay off my lawn.

A frozen water bottle hits Carl in the back. He stumbles, but Maria Juanita steadies him. She whips around and goes into fierce nun catechism mode.

MARIA JUANITA
Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."

Carl shoulders past Donny through the doors.

INT. CARL'S TRUCK - DAY

Carl is alone in the late afternoon glare of the sun. He's on the phone and tooling down the highway. Downshifting for the Fortuna Flats exit.

CARL
B-negative and male? Thanks.

ANGIE (ON PHONE)
Where are you now?

(CONTINUED)

CARL
Going to the links to work on my
swing.

ANGIE (ON PHONE)
Don't --

He hangs up.

EXT. FORTUNA GOLF CLUB HOUSE - DAY

DJ's F-10 is parked out front. The WHITE DODGE RAM and the
RED SIERRA 1500 in order on its right.

Carl pulls into a parking space in the center of the lot.

DJ, Bubba 1, and Bubba 2 knock back beers on the patio.
They've had a couple. DJ sees Carl advancing.

DJ
You owe me a paint job.

CARL
You daddy can pay for your toys. I
came here to collect.

DJ stands up like he's going to do something. Carl swings
and clocks his nose. Definitely broken. On his ass.

Bubba 1 and 2 stand up.

CARL
Did you help him kill that baby?

They freeze.

CARL
Yeah. Wise choice.

Carl turns away as DJ rises from the pavement. The Bubbas
stay put. Carl walks.

DJ charges, blood in his eye, and on his Patriot Boy shirt.
He grabs Carl in a bear hug. DJ's blood on Carl's back.

Carl sloughs him off and swings again - a bloodied lip and
down. The boy won't stay down.

Carl is almost to his truck. DJ goes into his glove box for
a couple rounds, reaches for his AR-10 from the gun rack.
CLICK.

ANGIE (OS)
I don't think so.

Angie has her service weapon leveled at DJ.

ANGIE
Please put the gun and ammo down,
DJ. Lock your fingers behind your
head, please. Are you going to
press charges?

DJ nods. He puts the rifle and the ammo on the front seat
and locks his fingers behind his head.

ANGIE
Please step away from your truck.
Go get some ice for your nose.

DJ complies, goes inside the clubhouse. She holsters her
revolver and takes the rifle from DJ's car.

ANGIE
(calling out)
Dammit, Carl. I gotta arrest you.

Carl sits upright in his truck, his back away from the seat.

CARL
(shouting)
I'll meet you at the cop shop.

He drives off, leaving a frustrated Angie in the lot.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

DEPUTY GARCIA (45) sits at the desk. Carl takes off his
shirt on the way in and hands it to Garcia.

CARL
That's evidence. Compare DJ Morel's
blood to the sample from my barn. I
bet it matches. Can I keep my belt?

WOODIE GUTHRIE SINGS "THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND." A bemused
Garcia nods. Carl sits on a chair. He puts his pocket knife,
keys, phone, and wallet on the desk. A half smile.

FADE OUT

THE END