

EL ESPINAZO DEL DIABLO

The Devil's Backbone

Story by

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*for a screenplay
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PROLOGUE

FADE IN

NIGHT

A dozen planes.
Bombers.
Shadows against the pale full moon.

ARAGON, SPAIN, 1937.

THE GROUND BELOW

A few, desolate lights, barely outlining a town.

CAMERA CLOSES IN

The bomb bay doors open silently, slicing the air.

IN THE COCKPIT

A red light blinks furiously.
Panic ensues.
The PILOT struggles and pulls levers.

TOO LATE

A bomb drops.
Then another one.
They whistle as they enter the clouds.
In slow motion, they approach the ground.

The voice of a kid.

"My father told me the story before he died..."

A bright rose of fire blooms in the night.

It illuminates a group of faces in a window: kids.
And on a window below, it casts its brief glow upon a scene
of butchery: a boy is being murdered.

The deadly struggle is distorted in the slimy surface of a
pool.

A glimpse of eyes,
a mouth...

then tears,

and a trail of blood.

"He said, that in the very beggining, God and the Devil fought for possession of man's soul..."

Someone carries the limp body of the child.
A life-sized plaster Christ observes the scene impassively.

JAIME, a lanky boy of 15, limps onto the patio, wiping a smear of blood from his cheek.

Hears a noise from above.

A whistling noise.

Growing louder.

Heading towards him.

Then...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

Dawn.
No man's land.

THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE

1940

A stretch of drab earth.

"His backbone broken, the Devil fell to earth and became the mountains. His tears burned the ground, his breath poisoned the air..."

A jagged strip of rock mountains rips the blood-red sky.
A small caravan of cars moves through the dusty roads.
Sunlight glints off the polished fenders.

"So... whatever grows here, grows full of thorns and dies quickly... or not at all"

Inside a black sedan, in the back seat, is **CARLOS**, age 7, dark hair and eyes in sharp contrast with his white skin. He gazes outside.

PULL BACK

Two **PLUMP MEN** and a **DRY WOMAN** sit next to him.

High-ranking social workers.
Impeccably dressed in dark fabrics.

THE CARAVAN

Approaches a monolith of ancient brick.
Not unlike a Roman mausoleum.

SANTA LUCIA'S ORPHANAGE

The cars park outside the walls in a semi-circle.
The entourage is greeted by **ALMA**, mid-thirties but
prematurely bitter.

A few hired reporters take photos at the school's gate.
Choreographed flashes and smiles.

Behind them, a stone sign on the arched entrance reads:

GIVE US YOUR CHILDREN, SPAIN WILL GIVE YOU BACK MEN.

INSIDE

A group of workers toiling intensely on a crumbled wall.

CLOSE IN TO REVEAL

That the workers are all boys of twelve or younger.
Laboring in the already hot morning.

CAMERA SINGLES OUT

JAIME, the teenage boy from the prologue, working hard.

Carlos locks eyes with him for a fleeting moment.
A booming voice shakes Jaime back to work.
It is a towering, beastly man in his mid 20's, **JACINTO**.
The school's porter.

The group moves past the RUSTED REMAINS OF a LARGE **R-34 BOMB**.

Firmly planted, dead center, in the broken tile floor.
Like a modernist sculpture of rough steel.
Colorful flower pots are arranged around it.

Alma dutifully informs the visitors that it landed three
years ago. An accident of war.
This is a "Republican" bomb.

*"It never went off. They came and defused it, but never
took it away."*

The plump social worker laughs at the Republican army.
He thinks the entire corps was an accident.
A mistake that *they* will correct.

From a window, a woman observes the group, while drinking a cup of tea.

This is **CARMEN**, the HEADMISTRESS.
A widow, permanently attired in black, but still very attractive. Her eyes much colder than her heart.
Next to her is **DOCTOR CASARES**, 65, elegant and fastidiously clean: science and history teacher.
There is a careful intimacy between them, like a well-adjusted married couple, now chaste and respectful.
Casares sneers at the visitors. "Fascists," he grunts.

CARMEN'S OFFICE. LATER.

One of the **SOCIAL WORKERS** - a supervisor - asks that young Carlos, the son of a notable soldier, be admitted. After all, CASARES is the boy's only living relative. His uncle.

But Casares hated his brother, a Fascist.
Let the mother's family see to the boy.
The superintendant claims the government would view this as an important political gesture on the orphanage's part.
All in all, he's persuasive.

But Carmen will not help.
The school's resources are at a breaking point.
Their government makes promises of aid but never delivers.
She cannot enroll another boy.
The superintendant takes a harsher line: she has no choice.
He places a generous amount of cash on Carmen's desk. The overt bribery and pressure do the trick.

IN THE PATIO

During this, Carlos wanders around.
Two small twins, **PACO and PEPE**, accost him.
They ask him, why is he there?
Is the supervisor his father?
Is the war over?
He tells them that he's just visiting.
On his way to his mother's.
They beg him for candy and cash. They spot a comic book in his pocket and try for that, too.
Carlos spots the social workers as they leave the building.
He hurries to catch up.

OUTSIDE

The boy looks in dismay as the cars grow smaller in the shimmering distance.

Alma lifts a small, beat-up suitcase containing all of Carlos' earthly possessions.

THE DRILL

Carlos gets introduced to the staff and the facilities. There are three teachers: ALMA, theology and physical education, DR. CASARES, and CARMEN, who takes care of discipline and mathematics. Then there is young, slim **CONCHITA**, the cook, who does the best she can with the meager resources at hand.

The school was built in the mid 1700's as a glass and tile factory. It is divided into two sections with a central patio.

There is a dormitory, communal shower, a refectory, and infirmary. Next to the gym, an old, slimy pool is skinned over by algae.

The kids study for six hours a day, then do social work for two hours more. There are three half-hour breaks for meals and the everyone takes turns with kitchen and maintenance chores.

Carlos is given three bars of soap, a blanket, a pillow and two towels. These items should last him for an entire year and will be inspected every quarter.

Failure to produce everything in perfect shape will result in a work penalty of two weeks kitchen duty.

THE DORMITORY

functions in an almost military way.

There are two rows of approximately 36 beds each.

Only half have occupants.

The rest have their mattresses bundled tightly against the walls, like shrouds in a catacomb.

There are two jars of water.

One for each section.

At bedtime, the candles are extinguished, along with two precious electric bulbs.

And that is that.

THE FIRST NIGHT

Carlos listens to a small concerto of noises keeping him awake.

A boy praying.

Another one turning in his bed.

Another one tapping on the wall.

Another one crying.

A FEW HOURS LATER.

Everything is quiet now.

Eerily quiet.

Carlos is thirsty.

He silently moves towards the water jar in his section.

It's almost empty. Barely an inch of water left.

He drinks it greedily.

The jar in the other section is half full.

He looks around.

Everybody seems asleep.

He goes for it.

But before he can touch it...

"What are you doing?"

Jaime has seen him, and is already on the move.

Two or three kids follow.

Jaime tries to charge him for the water.

Carlos refuses.

Jaime tells him: If he's thirsty, he should go get more water in the kitchen.

He shows him a ladder at the end of the ledge, right outside the window. He goes out, climbs down and climbs right back.

It's that simple.

Giggling amongst the other kids make it clear that it's not so.

"What about the ghost?" says **LUIS** a scrawny kid "I've seen it."

Others murmur and nod.

"There is no ghost," responds Jaime, furiously.

Carlos announces that he doesn't care about ghosts. He's not afraid. He will fill both jars of water...

if Jaime is brave enough to come along.

The challenge is accepted.

WATER BEARING

Closely watched by a cluster of kids from the window, Carlos and Jaime move along the ledge. Their balance is

precarious at best. The ledge is old and rotten, and crumbles under their weight.

They manage to reach the central patio.
Their steps echo eerily on the walls.
They walk past the bomb, gleaming in the half-light, dwarfed by its shadow.
Wind blows through the steel fins, whistling weirdly.

They pause in front of a window.
Faint music comes from inside.
JACINTO drinks from a bottle of wine, bites a piece of bread.
An old gramophone plays a *pasodoble*.
Jaime observes as Conchita steps out of the adjacent room.

IN JACINTO'S ROOM

Jacinto whispers to her: today he saw the safe: there must be money in it. Probably even other valuables: Carmen's husband was rich before he died.
He promises Conchita the world after they leave this hellhole.
They'll go to Granada, where his mother lives, buy a farm. Farms are very cheap there.
Jacinto kisses her brutally; she gives in.

Outside, Jaime is furious. It becomes apparent to Carlos that the teenager is in love with Conchita.

They move further along.
Enter the empty kitchen.
Jaime is very jumpy.
He fills one of the jars to the brim and exits the kitchen.

Heart racing, Carlos hurries to fill the second jug.
Unseen by him, a shadow crosses the background.
He shuts off the faucet and turns...
Nothing.

Carlos starts walking back.
The water faucet turns itself back on.
Startled, Carlos goes back and shuts it off, then heads back out.
As he does so, he hears faint footsteps behind him.
He stops.
So do the footsteps.
Something sighs with infinite sadness.
Carlos turns.
The place is empty.
He hurries across the patio.

As he enters he sees...
Jaime, hurrying back on the ledge...

and the ladder on the floor.

The twins are at the window, readying ammo and slingshots.

SWISH!!! Projectiles fly through the air and smash both jars.

Glass hits the floor with a loud CRASH!!!

Lights start turning on as Jaime shuts the window.

Jacinto steps out of his room, shotgun in hand.

Carlos runs. Jacinto yells for him to stop, but the kid is taking the stairs two at a time.

He runs down the corridor towards the bedroom, looking back: no one's behind him!!

He collides head-on into CARMEN.

CASARES

Professor CASARES performs his daily rituals: waking up, carefully shaving and grooming himself, then painting the white hairs on his head. He walks into the refectory.

BREAKFAST

At breakfast, the atmosphere is tense. Too many kids and an understaffed group of teachers struggle to make the best of it.

The young ones have bowls of cereal, the older ones eat cookies and watered-down milk.

Conchita puts ONE little grain of coffee in each kid's mouth as she recites, "one grain of coffee, one grain of strength".

This is both eucharistic and pathetic.

Casares sits at the teacher's table, next to Carmen.

Carlos stands nearby, books piled onto his extended arms.

He salivates as he watches the food on the table.

Carmen asks Casares to interrogate him again.

The old professor asks the boy to point out his accomplices.

If he does, then he will have breakfast.

He did it by himself, he insists.

JAIME and the twins murmur and gossip.

The twins admire Carlos: he's resisting well.

"He'll rat on us," snarls Jaime "You'll see"

Casares smiles: he likes the kid.
Nevertheless, he sits back and whispers something into Carmen's ear. Then, he turns to Carlos: He may go have breakfast now, BUT...

He wants him to wash his hands in the basin first.
Carlos smiles faintly, and crosses the dining room to get to the soap and water.

Casares and Carmen watch carefully.
None of the boys pay any attention to this.
All are too busy eating.
But three pairs of eyes follow him: JAIME and the twins.
Casares nods.
"It's them..," he whispers.
As Carlos washes his hands, Carmen springs into action:
calls the three boys' names out loud.
Carlos turns, as surprised as they are.

CLASSROOM

Carmen is talking to the kids about good and evil. Somehow, her conversation turns into something deeply disturbing.

One of the younger kids starts to cry. Pandemonium ensues.

Carlos bemusedly observes from outside the classroom, standing by the window.

JACINTO's voice snaps him out of it.

Carlos rejoins the twins and Jaime, hard at work, scrubbing the patio tiles around the bomb.
Jacinto, smoking a cigarette, supervises nearby.

THE WORKING KIDS

One of the twins (PACO) tells Carlos that he's still afraid of the bomb.

The adults say it's disarmed, but certain nights -if you move close enough- you can hear it ticking.

Then he asks about the outside world.

The twins have never seen it.

They love comic books and candy.

How are they made? Are they still being produced?

Carlos shows him some comic cards.

The twins want to trade them for two dry scabs and some marbles.

Jaime simply tries to take them.

An argument ensues, but then-

Conchita calls Jacinto into the kitchen and tells the boys to take a break.
She gives them all water to drink.
Jaime is fascinated and honoured as she pours him a glass.

CARMEN'S OFFICE

Carmen opens a small safe on the wall and hands Jacinto some cash.
He notes some more bills inside the safe.
She hands him a shopping list.
Conchita will go with him this time, to help pick the groceries more carefully: two of the boys got sick last week.

GYM-POOL AREA

Carlos relieves himself into the slimy pool.
Jaime and the twins walk in on him.
PACO stands by the door.
Jaime pulls out a sharp knife.
PEPE grabs Carlos.
Turns him around.
Pee splashes the tile.

PACO tries to defend Carlos.
Jaime pays no attention; he calls Carlos a "fag," a coward.
He says that he's going to castrate him.

Carlos struggles violently, punching Jaime in the stomach.
The fight between the kids is violent, raw.
Unleashed anger with no adult fear of consequences.

The TWINS are scared.
Jaime slips and falls into the pool.
He sinks rapidly.
After a few seconds PEPE screams: "He doesn't know how to swim!!"
CARLOS goes in after him.

Carlos swims in the green limbo of the pool.
No sign of Jaime.
Something pale and swift moves behind him.
Carlos turns: nothing.
He comes up for air, then goes back down.
The twins don't see JACINTO approaching.

Carlos finally spots Jaime on the pool bottom: his head is bleeding.
He grabs him by the arms and swims upwards.

A pale skeletal blur moves right behind them, almost catching up on their way to the surface.

Carlos drags the older boy out and immediately starts resuscitation.

Jaime disgorges a mouthful of slimy water.

Coughs: he's alive.

JACINTO finally enters and slaps them around.

He wants to know what's going on.

Unmoved by the dilemma, he hits Jaime again and again.

He sees the knife on the floor.

Asks whose is it?

A beat of silence.

Then Carlos says it is his: he started the fight.

Jacinto puts the knife in his own pocket, takes out his belt and proceeds to beat Carlos brutally.

He's furious about them playing near the pool. If they die, it's his responsibility, don't they understand that the pool is OFF LIMITS!!!

The other three boys observe in horror: Jacinto is strange, dangerous.

BARN

The boys load large wicker baskets into an old truck.

Jacinto takes one of many large gasoline cans and fills the tank.

Conchita comes out and climbs into the cab.

The twins hurry to open the heavy wooden doors.

Inside the truck cab, Conchita tells Jacinto that Carmen suspects something's wrong with the food.

Jacinto hushes her complaints with a kiss.

Conchita smiles timidly and nods.

Jacinto is obviously up to no good.

And she knows.

Jaime observes every gesture between the two adults.

He's enraged to see Jacinto caress her.

Carlos hears a noise and turns:

a small, pale shape is looking at them from the gym window. It is there only for the briefest moment, then disappears.

FOOD SHOPPING

Conchita and Carlos are shopping downtown.
The porter is buying all the cheapest, oldest food.
Rancid meat, vegetables, three day old bread, ready to be
fed to pigs.

AT A BAR

Jacinto has a drink with two of his buddies.

EL PUERCO and **MARCELO**.

He tells them how he's fed up with everything, how he
expects to break free.

How he hates that orphanage.

He grew up there, was beaten into manhood, went out and
came back.

He has no father and no mother living in Granada.

For him, the money is a sign.

With Franco, the country is entering a new, more prosperous
era.

So will he.

Conchita calls him back outside.

The bread vendor warns against the mould in the bread.

It is very poisonous.

Jacinto claims it will feed chickens and pigs back at the
orphanage.

Conchita is alarmed.

Jacinto dismisses her with a shrug.

He pulls out Jaime's knife and "scratches" the mould off.

She should toast the bread.

That takes care of the problem.

He's done it for months.

He pockets the change and, with a kiss, hushes any protests
from Conchita.

SCIENCE LAB LESSON

Dusk.

A grainy b&w film is projected on the blackboard.

Primitive hunters fight to bring down a mammoth in the Ice
Age: they hunt in a tight pack, using sharp, hand-made
lances to kill the beast, confusing it by circling around
it, yelling.

Production values are low, but the voice over, provided by
Casares as his history lesson, tries hard to make it all
first-class.

The boys watch enraptured.

Class ends and Casares asks Carlos to stay behind.

LATER

Casares is changing the preserving liquid in all the foetal specimens in jars.

As they work, Casares congratulates him on being a loyal boy.

He bemoans what is happening to the country.

...to his father... to the world.

He is enamored of both science and the Left.

"Method," he says, "will save you".

Whenever Carlos faces anything he fears, he should investigate, dig the facts up.

Spain is lost to superstition.

Franco will exterminate science and fuel Catholic faith.

Fascism, he claims, is an infectious disease.

It's spreading all over Europe.

Deforming our souls.

He explains that all these specimens are at least 100 years old.

The preserving liquid is rum with clove and spices.

Carlos helps Casares empty the murky liquid of one of the exhibits into glass bottles and corks them.

Casares will sell the liquid downtown, and give Carmen the money, to help.

He's been by her side for almost fifteen years and thinks she's a remarkable woman.

Her husband was a friend.

A very good friend.

People drink the foetal liquid and call it "child's water", believing it helps cure blindness, kidney pain and most important, impotence.

Casares insists, of course, that he has never tasted it.

He laughs at these superstitions.

It's just a really good, aged rum.

After 60, men will pay anything to get their boners back.

The stuff sells at outrageous prices.

He pours a small glass.

Would Carlos care to try?

The boy, horrified, passes on the opportunity.

Casares laughs, refills the specimen jar with fresh liquid and puts it back on the shelf.

And, just before leaving, as Carlos turns his back...

... he gulps the glass.

THE SECOND NIGHT

Carlos cannot sleep.
There's something on his mind.
He quietly goes to Jaime's bed and awakens him.
The twins join them

They open the window and pull out their most valuable treasures: comic books, silk worms, cigarette stubs and candy.

They play childish games, smoke and discuss every topic imaginable.

Music and light emanate from the porter's room.

Jaime volunteers that Jacinto once beat him so hard that he split his shinbone in two.

He exhibits a rough scar under his pant leg.

By the time he dared tell anyone, his leg had healed all wrong.

The doctor fractured it again and again, but it never set right.

Never.

Every step he takes, he thinks of Jacinto and hates him more.

He's a pig and Conchita is a rose.

Carlos asks about the ghost.

Jaime avoids the subject, quickly goes back inside.

The twins tell Carlos that one of the younger boys, Santi, disappeared during the bombing.

The teachers think he escaped in fear.

Probably into the mountains.

But the children think otherwise.

Some have seen the ghost.

They believe that the spirit will come out if you stand by the water and call his name.

The rusty bomb howls in melancholy.

POOL AREA

It's almost dawn.

Carlos steps over debris and broken tile.

The water sends shimmering reflections over the walls and vaulted ceiling.

He cautiously approaches the edge of the pool.

Nothing there but his reflection.

A door creaks behind him:

A store room...
A flimsy old rope holds the door ajar.
It creaks again as the wind moves it.

"Santi," he whispers.
Nothing.
"Santi, come out and play."
Then a voice, "Help me"
In the water, Carlos sees the reflection of a ragged,
ghostly figure standing behind him.
Carlos turns around.
He is alone.
"Help me"
Footsteps.

Now the store room door is wide open.
Carlos approaches.

THE STORE ROOM

Life-size saints and diverse religious artifacts sit under
a heavy tarp. A piano in an extreme state of disrepair lies
on its side, covered with dust.

Footsteps again.
Carlos follows them.
The tarp moves.
Carlos approaches it.
He jerks it away.
The wall is horribly stained with dry blood.

Bold, dramatic lines smear out the tale of a struggle.
A small imprint of a child's hand is visible.
Next to it a broken window.
Glass on the floor.
"Help me."
The voice says again.
"He killed me..."
Carlos turns.
A tiny skeletal hand grabs the edge of a nearby statue.
Carlos is horrified.
Before the rest of the ghostly body emerges form behind.
He runs away.

MORNING

All the boys shower.
The older ones scrub the younger ones, helping them soap
and dry.
Jaime minds Luis.

Carlos and the twins struggle with **ELIO**, a rebellious little fucker who seemingly can't stay put. Carlos claims he saw the ghost the night before. It asked for his help. Someone here killed him. Jaime tells him to shut up. The subject bothers him enormously. He's tired of hearing about it. Carlos asks him to tell him all he knows. Why is he afraid to talk about it? Jaime punches him in the mouth and leaves.

BREAKFAST

The usual coffee bean ritual, and then, an announcement: Carmen regrets to inform everyone that today is the last morning they will ever use the dining area. The furniture will be sold. From now on the boys will eat in the kitchen, in groups of five. She falters, discreetly seeking out Casares' hand.

Plates and bread are passed around. Conchita observes uneasily as the kids devour their rations.

Carlos vows he will look for the ghost again that night. The twins excitedly chime in. They agree to save their bread for the excursion. They'll have a "picnic by the pool." The other children eat.

Jaime gives his bread to Elio and Luis.

BY THE POOL

Carlos discreetly follows Jaime to the pool area. Jaime starts talking, apparently to himself. Breaking down. "What does he want??" He shouts, then mutters. "I can't do nothing for you!" Carlos walks in as Jaime collapses in tears.

DISEASE

Some of the children are sick. Heavy stomach cramps and fever. Carmen tracks the disease back to the mouldy bread. Conchita tearfully confesses.

They look for Jacinto.
He's not in his post.
Carmen is furious.
Conchita thinks she knows where he is.

As they enter Carmen's office, Jacinto is trying to open the safe.
He confronts the women.
He's angry.
A savage.
He vomits out years of hatred in an instant.
He pulls out Jaime's knife.
Casares enters, carrying the porter's shotgun.
Orders him to leave.
Now.

EXODUS

Jacinto gets his things together.
He leaves.
The kids cheer, some throwing rotten vegetables and rocks at him.
They close the heavy doors behind him.
He stares back at Conchita, who stands defiantly in the window over the school's entrance.
Casares oversees the procedure, shotgun in hand.
Carmen stares at her hero with immense pride.
All in all, everything seems fine.

DAWN

Most of the kids are feeling better.
Casares will fetch some medicine in town.
Carmen kisses the old doctor Casares goodbye.
Then she talks to Conchita.
She would like her to leave in the morning.
Jaime and Carlos ready the old pick up truck.
Jaime is very happy, even talky.
He discusses his life as an orphan: he feels useless, except for the fact that he believes that he was put here to defend Conchita from Jacinto, and to take care of the smaller kids.

Suddenly Carlos notices gasoline dripping: the tank's been perforated.
Jaime shows him something else: most of the gasoline cans are missing, and the garage door is open.
Jaime, worried, steps out to investigate.
He takes the shotgun.

ALONG THE OUTSIDE WALLS

The gasoline cans have been lined up.
Jacinto is there, working in the semi-darkness, like a spider.
Jaime tells Carlos to fetch Casares.
Carlos runs.

Jacinto notices Jaime, and, grinning, pulls out the knife.
Heads towards the boy.
Jaime, hyperventilating, faces him.
Raises the shotgun.

CARLOS

Reaches Casares, yells incoherently for everyone to leave the dormitory.
Carmen, Alma and Conchita wake up some kids, help others out.
Casares heads for the door.

OUTSIDE

Jaime and Jacinto stare at each other.
The porter lights a match.
Jaime yells "NO" and fires the shotgun.
It grazes the porter's shoulder, tearing chunks of flesh, spraying blood.
Jaime is thrown to the floor by the kickback.
A line of fire snakes rapidly towards the cans as the injured porter flees into the dawn.
Casares steps out and hurries to try and stop the flames from reaching the cans.
Carlos pulls Jaime inside, and they hide behind the old truck.

THE KIDS

are in the process of evacuating

THEN

It happens
A huge wall of flames erupts and blows out the nearest dormitory wall.
Engulfing Alma, Conchita and half a dozen kids.
A cloud of dust immediately blurs everything from view.

AFTERMATH

Casares gets up.
He's bloodied and cannot hear anything after the explosion,
but he is alive.
Jaime and Carlos, too.
The truck is crushed.
They move inside the building.

RUINS

Dazed boys walk amidst the ruins of the dormitory, now
collapsed into a smoking mass over the dining room and the
kitchen below.
"The floor disappeared," repeats Luis, wandering aimlessly.
"The floor's not there anymore"
Conchita is alive, but Alma is crushed under the rubble.
She died instantly.

Conchita starts grouping kids together, Jaime helping her.
Casares and Carlos walk into the smoking ruins.
Cadavers are half-hidden by broken stone and beams.
Casares extracts embedded glass shards from legs, arms and
faces.
A shout!
They've found Carmen!!

They work to free her from the rubble.
Her right leg is smashed.
An amputation is in order.

Casares asks Conchita to gather some water in jars. Get
some clean rags.
He is in a panic.
He is a doctor, but he hasn't done anything but dissect
frogs for the last fifteen years.
Now this.

Carmen reassures him.
But he can't hear her.
On a scrap of paper, she writes: "I trust you."

IN THE RUINS OF THE LAB

Jaime and Carlos gather the necessary instruments and
implements.

FIRST AID

Casares uses the alcohol from the foetuses to clean the
skin around the smashed leg.

The operation is brutal.
Casares does his best as Carmen's blood and life fade away.
She dies.
He's devastated.
He locks himself in his office, crying in despair.
Inside his head, the world is in absolute silence.
He holds a bloodied piece of paper. It reads:
"I trust you."

CARLOS, JAIME AND CONCHITA

Organize some beds and discuss the possible scenarios.
No one in town heard the explosion, so help won't be on its way.
They need to send a "patrol" to cross the desert at night and reach town by morning.

She will go.
She is responsible.
She will bring help.
Jaime gives her a grain of coffee.
She kisses the boy close to the mouth.
And leaves.

CARLOS AND JAIME

Organize the edible food into rations and decide that there's enough there for three days or so.
No more.
They decide to talk to Casares.

IN HIS OFFICE

Casares sits silently in the dark.
Carlos and Jaime come inside.
They call to him. But he doesn't respond.
"He can't hear," murmurs Jaime.
They approach, move him.
He's dead, holding the shotgun in his hands.

CONCHITA WALKS

The empty desert road.
Harsh, blinding sun burns her head.
Her feet are swollen and red.

AT DUSK

She can see the outline of the distant town.
Like a mirage, a car appears on the horizon.
She waves at it.

It stops.

On board el PUERCO and MARCELO.

And emerging from the backseat, JACINTO.

Knife in hand.

"I'm not afraid of you," she says, and repeats it again and again as the blade enters her chest.

Her final drama, lost in the immensity of the landscape.

THE SURVIVORS

Have grouped in small clusters. They light bonfires with the school furniture and share some food.

Some ask about Mr. Casares.

Epecially little Luis, who is in pain.

They are told by Jaime and Carlos that he is resting; they will keep vigil all night long at his office.

Carlos and Jaime take Casares' portion and a candle and go upstairs.

AT THE OFFICE

Casares body is already covered in flies.

They eat the miserable meal.

Jaime tells Carlos how Santi died.

Carlos thinks he knows...

Jaime killed Santi...

No.

Wrong.

He saw who killed Santi...

FLASHBACK

Jaime and Santi steal food from the closed pantry.

They've busted the lock.

Jacinto discovers them.

Gets angry at them.

Takes them to the gym and beats them really hard.

Snaps Jaime's leg, whips Santi down to the floor.

Santi bites the porter's hand.

Scratches his neck.

Fights back.

The porter smashes a window.

A distant explosion flares outside.

The porter smashes the boy's head against a wall.

Again and again.

A drop of blood spatters Jaime's face.

He moves away as the Porter finishes his grizzly deed.

The pool calmly reflects the brutal struggle.

Then ripples.

JAIME

Finishes his tale.
They hear a faraway sound.

A CAR

approaches in the distance.
"It's Conchita!!" shouts Carlos.
"No".
Jaime is afraid.
"She would be coming back with more people."
They move the candle behind Casares.
Stay low.
From below, Jaime moves the shotgun slightly.
Swivels the chair a bit.
They peek.
The car has

STOPPED

PUERCO AND MARCELO hand a pair of binoculars to JACINTO.
The old man's there with the shotgun.
Jacinto has them turn off the headlights.
They'll outwait him.

THE NEXT DAY

The kids wait in the sun, hungry, restless, sick.
Carlos wanders into the death hall to fetch more food from
the icebox and the pantry.
He has to climb over the remains of both building and
occupants.
He reaches the ice box.
Takes some food.
He feels himself watched.
Turns to find he's face-to face with the ghost of Santi.
In the dusty beams of light the boy is a small, fragile
thing, a tattered ectoplasmic marionette.
Its bones are semi-visible inside his body.
Its skull crushed on one side.
It's sad more than scary.
Carlos asks him where his body is.
The ghost caresses his cheek. And disappears.
Carlos touches his face: it's wet.
"The pool."

Carlos gathers some more food.

Through the crumbled wall something becomes apparent:
PUERCO's car is parked outside.

Carlos hurries to the patio. Asks for Jaime.
He's readying the candle and ration for "Casares."
LUIS pleads to go along.
He wants to asks Casares to look at his arm, it hurts so
much.
Jaime promises to ask on his behalf.

As they climb the stairs, Carlos tells Jaime about Santi.
He wants someone to avenge his death.
He lies at the bottom of the pool. Unburied. Forgotten.

They enter Carmen's office.
Casares' body's in the same position. His hand resting
limply on the desk.
No shotgun.
They turn.
Puerco, Marcelo and Jacinto are standing there.
They have it.

WORKING

In the rubble, all the surviving kids are forced to dig in
the remains of Carmen's office.
Jacinto is his old brutal self.
Driving the operation with ruthless efficiency.
He's after the safe and the money inside.
Jaime stands up to him.
Tells him Conchita will return with help any minute now.
Jacinto and his pals laugh out loud.
Conchita won't be returning.
Jaime is horrified.

THE BOYS

are exhausted.
By sunset, they find the safe, partially interred.
The three men merrily shut them in the pantry and start
bashing the safe's lock with heavy hammers.

IN THE PANTRY

The boys make plans.
They will need to fight back.
Jaime shows them how.
Like hunters taking down a mammoth.
They'll hunt in a pack, using hand-made lances made of the
slimmest wood they can find.

For it to work, they need one of the boys to climb out a tiny window and open the door from outside.
Only Luis can fit.

LATE THAT NIGHT

They work on their weapons and help Luis out.
The boy squeezes through,
But falls on one of his knees. He can barely move.
He is almost discovered by PUERCO passing by.
Puerco is called back; Jacinto has opened the safe.
The boy inches his way towards the door, but stops,
overcome by pain.
A shadow covers him.
He smiles.

FROM INSIDE

The boys hear the lock turn. The group comes out.
Luis lays on the floor, several yards from the door.
He claims Casares opened it. Their old teacher wants them to be brave.
On the floor: Carmen's handwritten note.

THE HUNT

The three adults drunkenly celebrate their victory.
The kids overhear: Jacinto has a plan...
They will kill the kids in the morning. Then burn the rest of the building and leave.
They will incinerate Conchita's body in there.
Jaime orders the group of boys to split up.
They surround Puerco and Marcelo as they wander off to take a leak.
They execute Puerco in a swift, brutal attack.
Marcelo is horrified, badly injured, and runs away. The kids are overjoyed.
But next comes...

JACINTO, THE MAMMOTH

He hears PUERCO's screams and goes for the shotgun.
He moves amidst the ruins cautiously, discovering a trail of blood.
He follows it to the gym's door.
There he sees Puerco's impaled body.
He moves...

INSIDE THE GYM

Scuttling noises.

Moving shapes
Jacinto shoots wildly.
The shotgun kickback hurts his injured shoulder.
It bleeds again.
From out of nowhere, a pair of kids pierce his sides.
Jacinto squeals and violently turns.
Others swarm at him.
But he's too strong, too brutal.
He fights back, taking down many of the kids.
The battle is fierce, deadly.
Shotgun shells spill to the floor.
The kids sink their handmade lances into Jacinto, trying to stop him, puncturing torso, legs, arms.
A shotgun blast swipes away a handful as if they were flies.
Others are punched full-force in the face.
He discovers one of the injured kids: Jaime.
He steadies himself to shoot him again.
At that moment, he sees the figure of Santi staring at him from within the murky pool waters.
Carlos takes this chance to thrust his lance deeply under the porter's arm. Jaime follows suit.
Jacinto falls into the pool.
He thrashes wildly.
The howling boys keep him from the edge with their lances.
The water foams and turns red.
The boys watch in astonishment as...
the screaming man is dragged down by a pale form beneath.

SUNLIGHT

Filters through the broken ruins.

THE POOL

is being drained.

Jaime watches attentively as the oily water reveals two bodies entangled at the bottom, one barely a skeleton.

Carlos approaches. "Everybody is ready."

THE END

One by one, the boys exit the ruins.

Carlos casts a sad look back. Then, his voice...

"My father told me about it... told me about this place..."

Casares' chair is empty.

Next to the bomb, Puerco's body hangs limply from multiple lances, like an ancient warning sign. A totem.

"The place where the Devil fell to earth and became the mountains.

Here his breath poisoned the air, his tears burnt the ground. But he stayed... Father never mentioned what happened to God..."

Jaime weakly leans on Carlos, wraps his arm around him. They join the group and move into the desert, lances held high.

"Maybe he just went away..."

Past the archway that reads:

GIVE US YOUR CHILDREN, SPAIN WILL GIVE YOU BACK MEN.

"... or maybe he just forgot..."