

Blood Box

EXT. BALTIMORE JOB FACILITY - OUTSIDE COURTYARD - DAY

In the near future, poverty is at an all-time high and the half percent of the population control nearly all of the wealth. The United States has instituted labor zones, where people who live in that region must work in order to maintain their basic, meager living. One of those people is JOSE ALVAREZ (mid 40s; Hispanic American), who is in line trying to fight for a job opportunity. With a well worn picture of his family in his pocket, he progresses slowly up the line while fighting off anyone who desperately tries to push him out of the way. Away from the work lines, the building is surrounded by thousands of people. Most are in line for work, but other are in the area for a multitude of reasons. Some are around to try to sell goods (both legit and fraudulent) to those in line, some are security guards (all well armed), and other are panhandlers (either unaware or don't care that the ones in line don't have much more money than they do). As Jose walks towards the entrance of the building, a convoy of unmarked red boxes are exiting the building. The cries of the families moving towards the plain red boxes can be heard if you are to pay attention, but everyone in the crowd (including Jose) ignore the commotion.

INT. BALTIMORE JOB FACILITY - PUBLIC AREA - DAY

After what seems to be days, Jose enters the building. Shortly after Jose passes through the door, a guard standing just inside the building checks his counter. He gives the other guards around the access point a signal and they both proceed to raise their weapons and close the door. The few that are standing just at the entrance desperately run in. A few make it, but most are pushed back outside. The roar of a riot can be heard emanating from beyond the building walls. A spray of gunfire is the only thing that quells the public noise to a whimper. This time the cries from the slaughtered crowd start to get to Jose, but he maintains composure, choosing to think of his family first and the money that he needs to send back to them. The inside of the facility gives off the air of false appearances. Many colorful displays adorn the area with propaganda messages on the positives of the Labor Initiative. The Labor Initiative, a nationwide program created in response to the collapsed, top-heavy economy, is used to keep members outside of the elite employed. However in reality, it is a glorified sweatshop establishment used to keep to the elite from having to do any physical work; a plutocratic dream. The laborers are lead by smiling guides into another section with entrances labeled "Employees Only Beyond This Point". Before this point, every laborer has to go through several scans to their eyes, body, fingers, etc. This is where Jose receives his number, Worker #074269. The guide that gives him his number and gestures him to continue towards the doorway.

As he passes through the doorway, Jose feels a sense of dread that is in stark contrast to the elegant image that the facility projects at its surface.

INT. BALTIMORE JOB FACILITY - JOB ASSIGNMENT AREA

Jose stands with host of other laborer waiting to hear their new instructions. The area they stood in was a stark contrast from the bright aesthetics of the outer area. The large room he and the others were standing in was dark, with a hazy stench of mildew in the air that filled their lungs. After what seems to be ages, a man (JOHN STRAUS; Caucasian American; late 40's) walk into the room with a group of guards. Walking high with his chest sticking out and dressed in a uniform that echoes military superiority, he gets to the room and begins to speak to the laborers.

JOHN STRAUS

Hellllllooo spring daisies. I love new recruits. I am John Straus and I am your new one and only. When I or any supervisor says something, you do it. That is the only action and reaction in this exchange. We tell you to act and you do it. There is no other option, no wiggle room. And I did not error when I referred to you bunch as recruits. This is not work, this is service. Your life is not your own. You were made to serve a higher cause and a better people. And you will do that with pride and reverence. Is that clear?

LABORER CROWD

(In uneven unison)

Yes sir.

JOHN STRAUS

Now that's what I like to hear. You will be given your assignments shortly. Enjoy your new lives.

As Straus leaves, guards begin to position themselves amongst the crowd and begin herding them to the loading dock.

EXT. BALTIMORE JOB FACILITY - LOADING DOCK - DAY

Hundreds of laborers are being lead to various buses heading to different work locations.

Jose is lead to one of these buses, which has the appearance of a prison transport bus, equipped with a gate separating the laborers from the driver and restraints for rowdy passengers. He sits there in silence as the bus leaves to its destination.

EXT. LITTLE FRIAR MOUNTAIN - DROP OFF AREA - DAY

The bus reaches its destination. Jose notices that the sign near the facility says "Little Friar Mountain Mine", which is confirmed when the bus moves closer to the scarred earth that surrounds the area. The bus reaches the arrival zone and the laborers are instructed to get off the bus. As Jose and the others reach their bunker, they look around to notice the size and orchestration of the mining site.

INT. LITTLE FRIAR MOUNTAIN - LABORER BUNKER - NIGHT

Hours later, Jose is laying on his bed in an outdoor bunker with many other laborers. Because of the time his arrival, he was only able to work on a small shift. However that small shift has left Jose sore and extremely tired. As he lays in the bed holding his family photo in his hand, several other laborers enter the bunker with the end of their shift. Most begin to talk to one another as they walk to their bunks. One of them, QUINN JENKINS (African American; late 20s), walks towards Jose while talking to a couple of workers.

LABORER 1

No, that shouldn't count. I had the under and the transmission ended with me winning big.

LABORER 2

Yeah, so did I. We should be getting paid.

QUINN

But you two didn't win. Just cause the signal conked out doesn't mean the game was over. It continued and like everyone else who made the bets like you guys did, you loss. Now pay up, I gotta get some sleep.

Quinn pulls out a small tablet-like device, which the laborers then proceed to put their personal data sticks in so they can transfer the funds they owe. Once that is completed, Quinn continues to head towards Jose's direction, which Jose assumes means that Quinn is his bunk-mate.

QUINN (CONT'D)

(to Jose)

I guess you're the new bunk buddy.  
Name's Quinn.

JOSE

Jose.

QUINN

(after shaking Jose's  
hand)

Word is there's some sweet action  
in play for Washington next week.  
They don't cover the spread as  
often as I like, but you could be  
in luck.

JOSE

With what money?

QUINN

You think that's stopped these guys  
from betting their pay on a dream?  
It's like the lottery, just the  
thought of hitting the big one  
keeps them coming. I think it's  
stupid, but I just collect the  
money. The bookie needed someone  
and it might as well be me.

JOSE

Either way, I'll pass. I can't  
remember the last time I even  
watched a football game.

QUINN

Nobody here can, that's why you  
can't stop betting. I think the  
last time I may have was when I was  
about 8. It was at a sports bar  
where I grew up, I think. It's  
closed now, like most of them, but  
when the game was on it was the  
only place where it felt like you  
could talk to anyone no matter  
where they were from and at least  
get along for a few hours. That  
and it had plenty of cheap liquor  
to occupy my dad.

Quinn notices that Jose is holding a photo while listening to  
him talk.

QUINN (CONT'D)  
(while gesturing to  
Jose's photo)  
At least it looks like you're a  
better father than mine ever was.

JOSE  
(after realizing Quinn is  
referencing his family  
photo)  
Yeah, I always keep it with me.  
Have to know what you're fighting  
for, so to speak.

QUINN  
I know what you mean. Would've  
done the same myself, but I guess I  
was a little short-sighted. I have  
nothing but my memories to keep me  
going at this point. Which kinda  
sucks cause I remember my son as a  
baby and he should be about 4 by  
now. I think I wouldn't know who  
he was even if he was staring at me  
in the face.

JOSE  
Trust me, you'll know. You  
wouldn't be shedding blood here if  
you couldn't.

QUINN  
Thanks.

Quinn begins to get into his bed.

JOSE  
Better call it a night.

QUINN  
Yeah, you're right. The money  
class needs those tablets to work.

Jose laughs while the two of them settle down in their beds  
for the night.

INT/EXT. LITTLE FRIAR MOUNTAIN - MONTAGE

For months, Jose and Quinn work in the Little Friar Mountain  
mines in some of the harshest conditions imaginable. With  
the elimination of all unions and worker's rights,  
corporations are free to treat their workers as poorly as  
indentured servants.

Along with the disappearance of the middle class and insulation of the wealthy from society, nobody cares about the state of the American employee. For workers, working situations like at Little Friar Mountain are business as usual. For Jose, it is common to have to rinse himself off at the end of some nights with water from the toilet with clean water being scarce and needing to be shared by nearly all of the workers in the mine. The food is also below a reasonable standard, with diets leading to malnutrition and various illnesses. All of this adds up to a situation of intensive labor that can break every man in the mine down to their lowest level. There are days that Jose doubts that he will be able to survive, but two things keep him determined from day to day. The first is the thought of what will happen to his family if he doesn't send back any money and the second is the realization that any mistake can spell the end of anyone working in this mine.

INT. LITTLE FRIAR MOUNTAIN - INSIDE MINE

Jose and Quinn are in a lower section of mine trying to navigate the recently discovered deposits of rare minerals that were discovered in yesterday's survey. Their jobs for the day is to be trailblazers for the rest of the laborers. Once the two of them mark and confirm the deposit clusters, the rest of the workers come in to excavate the minerals. The two of them know they're in the right place, but they don't see nearly as much to mine as you would expect for a survey result.

QUINN

I think they screwed up.

JOSE

What do you mean? I see some of the stuff right here.

QUINN

Not enough to have us crawling in the muck. Who did the search yesterday anyway?

JOSE

(mood turns somber)

I think it was Janet.

Both of them have a small moment thinking about Janet. She had been suffering from an infection from a cut she got a couple weeks earlier. Even though she was in clear need of bed-rest, the foreman in charge forced her to work. Jose and Quinn now believe that the errors were caused by this.

QUINN

The infection must have spread.  
She shouldn't have been out here  
with the shape of her leg.

JOSE

Well, she's usually right and we  
don't have a choice, so let's work  
with what we got. Start digging.

Quinn reluctantly joins Jose in digging. Using archaic tools such as pickaxes and crude explosives, Quinn and Jose navigate their way through the surveyed course.

INT. LITTLE FRIAR MOUNTAIN - INSIDE MINE - HOURS LATER

Jose and Quinn continue on through the course laid out in Janet's map. As a sign to Janet's skill, some of the results are coming up positive with large clusters of rare minerals, however many of the readings are incorrect and the two of them are having to make up for the company forcing Janet to work in her condition.

JOSE

(after looking at area he  
used his pickax on)  
Damn, another dead end. She tried  
her best, but they shouldn't have  
had her out here.

QUINN

I think this path is dry. We  
should probably move on.

JOSE

You're right. Let's go. Make sure  
to grab everything.

QUINN

Got ya.

Jose begins to walk away from the area while Quinn is still picking up the remaining tools. As he is doing this, he hears a faint but troubling sound. The mine walls started to shift violently. This immediately puts fear into Quinn's eyes.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Get out, NOW!

Both men begin to run away from the area while the corridor begins to collapse.



Jose is able to escape unharmed, however because Quinn was closer to the collapse's center, his leg gets caught in the falling debris. Jose runs back to help him.

JOSE

Shit! How bad is it?

QUINN

My foot is caught, but I can still feel it so it could be worse. We must've hit a pressure point. The company must not have told Janet. She wouldn't have lead us down here if she did.

JOSE

We can figure that out later.  
Right now, we have to move.

The tremors are getting worse around them. Jose knows that the only hope for survival is to leave now. This forces him to come to a terrible conclusion. He looks around and sees a nearby metal rod. He then positions the rod under the large rock that is trapping Quinn.

JOSE (CONT'D)

Listen, this is what's going to happen. I'm going to lift this rock and you're going to crawl out and run. Don't look back, don't wait for me.

QUINN

I'm not gonna let you die for.

JOSE

Trust me, I'll be right behind you.  
Besides, you need to see your kid.  
Now, get ready.

After the two brace themselves, Jose lifts the rock using the rod. Once the rock is up, Quinn crawls out, gets to his feet, and moves as quick a possible out of the area. Once Jose sees that Quinn is free, he releases the rod and heads out himself. As the two of them run out of the corridor, the mine ceiling begins to collapse. Despite Quinn's injury, he's able to run far enough to avoid the danger. However, with Jose being further back, the debris, falling rock, and dust envelope him. Quinn and some other workers are horrified at the sight of what just happened in front of them.

EXT. LITTLE FRIAR MOUNTAIN - OUTSIDE MINE - DAY

A few miners pull out Jose's body, covered in a soiled drape, out of the rubble. A number of the other miners, including Quinn, look on with sadness as Jose's body is taken away to be sent back to Baltimore. One of the foremen sees this and starts to yell at the workers.

FOREMAN 1

Hey, what are you bunch standing  
around for? GET BACK TO WORK!  
Y'all act like you've never seen a  
dead body before.

Quinn and the others are furious at the disrespect given to Jose's death, however they know the consequences for talking back so they get back to work, trying their best to hold back their emotions.

INT/EXT. JOURNEY OF JOSE'S BODY - MONTAGE

Jose's body, still covered in a drape, is in the a pile with other dead bodies in a room. The only thing identifying Jose's body is a tag hanging from his neck that has "Worker #074269" written on it. These bodies are next to a row of red boxes. The bodies are carried unceremoniously into the red boxes and labeled with a sticker that displays the workers assigned number. The boxes are the carried to a large cargo truck and loaded into the rear compartment. Rattling in the back with only the other boxes to keep from tumbling over, the boxes make their way back to Baltimore. Once they arrive, the boxes are wheeled out to the public area outside the job facility, past another crowd of people desperately looking for work. The box with Jose's body stops in front of a YOUNG HISPANIC WOMAN (early 20s) who is weeping heavily at the site of the box.

YOUNG HISPANIC WOMAN

NO! Daddy.  
(Struggles to speak  
between sobbing)  
I don't know how to tell Mom.

While Jose's daughter grieves for her father, a young Asian woman walks past the area. She notices the grieving, but as with Jose before her, she mostly ignores it. The only thing that her mind is focused on is that she and her family need the money.

END