

DANDELION

By

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EXT. YUNGAY VALLEY - FIELD - DAY

Emerging from the darkness, we ascend to the earth's surface, pushing through fields of dandelions and lush green pastures, until a vast plantation unfolds before us, stretching out as far as the eye can perceive.

A hand emerges from the crops, breaking the perfect geometric pattern.

NUNA (V.O.)
(in Quechua)
When I was a child my grandmothers
told me a story. Huandoy, the daughter
of The Supreme God Inti...,

EXT. MALLQUI FIELD - NIGHT

In the flicker of a bonfire, sparks dancing in the air, a YOUNG NUNA sits enraptured as her two GRANDMOTHERS regales her with the tale of Huandoy. Their voices fill the night, weaving a spellbinding narrative.

NUNA (V.O.)
...fell in love with a mortal prince
of the Valley of the Yungas, called
Huascarán. When the father god found
out about the love between his
daughter and the prince...

EXT. TOP OF A MOUNTAIN - DAY

Surrounded by mist, an old SHAMAN, 80, dressed in tradition Inca's clothing, organizes offerings on a embroidered blanket while chewing coca leaves.

EXT. YUNGAY VALLEY - FIELD - DAY

OLDER NUNA, 27, stands tall, her hair concealed by a vibrant scarf. In the distance, the imposing Huascarán mountain range looms, its snow-capped peak piercing the stormy sky.

NUNA (V.O.)
(in Quechua)
... His fury was so great that he
condemned them to live apart for all
eternity. Huandoy and Huascarán were
transformed into two majestic
mountains covered with eternal snow.
(in Spanish)
The story goes something like that

anyway, more or less, long ago.

EXT. TOP OF A MOUNTAIN - DAY

The shaman chants in the ancient tongue of Quechua, wafting incense and coca leaves into the air, as ash and glittery specks swirl around him. In one hand, he clutches a guinea pig, and in the other, a knife.

EXT. YUNGAY VALLEY - FIELD - DAY

Nuna walks in the direction of the mountain, caressing the tall grass.

NUNA (V.O.)

When was it? It feels like it was only yesterday. A memory that has been lost in time, like so many others.

EXT. TOP OF A MOUNTAIN - DAY

The shaman enters a trance, his voice reaching fever pitch as he sings with abandon, the air thick with smoke. He hurls blood and other offerings into the fire, causing it to erupt in a shower of sparks.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. HUASCARÁN AND YUNGAY VALLEY - AERIAL SHOT - DAY

The clouds part like a curtain to unveil the grandeur of the Huascarán, towering over the lush green valleys, hillsides, and plantations below. The view is breathtaking, with lagoons, rivers, and villages emerging from behind the fog. And there it is, nestled among the mountains, the colonial town of Yungay, a precious gem of the Andes.

INT. YUNGAY - SANTA INÉS SCHOOL - DAY

There is a framed photograph on the wall. It's a picture of students in uniform. A plaque indicates: "Santa Inés and Ccori Ocllo - 5th year 1969 - Yungay". The picture is one of various framed photos that cover the corridor's walls.

NUNA (V.O.)

Our fixation on the future blinds us to the erosion of our memories, which slip away with every passing second. Life is fleeting, and time has a way of altering everything. But perhaps it's not the world that changes, but

our perception of it.

We step inside a deserted classroom, overlooking the picturesque town of Yungay, with its grand square and iconic church, and beyond that, the towering snow-capped peak of Huascarán. Suddenly, a tremor RUMBLES through the floor, growing in intensity by the second. And then, with a THUNDEROUS ROAR, a section of the mountain gives way, triggering a massive LANDSLIDE that engulfs everything in its path. The quake intensifies, shattering windows and adding to the chaos and destruction.

NUNA (V.O.)

Ideas and civilizations come and go.
Unlikely friendships, impossible
romances... But everything is a single
part of a movement. There are things
that endure. And there are things that
disappear...

(pause)

Forever.

Birds scatter into the sky, their wings flapping furiously. The HOWLING of barking dogs fills the air. A thick cloud of dust engulfs the streets, and distant VOICES scream in panic. The avalanche approaches, a monstrous mass of mud, ice, and debris that sweeps everything in its path: buildings, trees, people, cars, and animals.

The ROAR of the landslide is deafening, drowning out all other sounds. The room is plunged into darkness as the shadow of the landslide creeps closer. The windows SHATTER under the force of the wind, and we brace ourselves for impact. At the last moment, we retreat through the glass door of the classroom, narrowly escaping the wrath of the unstoppable force.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. LIMA - BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - DAY

MIGUEL CISNEROS, 18, a fair-skinned youth of Spanish ancestry, smashes through a glass panel with explosive force.

SHARDS OF GLASS LITTER the corridor floor as Miguel writhes in agony, his moans filling the air.

Through the doorframe where the glass panel used to be, we glimpse a scared STUDENT, massaging his throbbing fist. Miguel lays on the floor, dissatisfied and rebellious.

A crowd of students and teachers gather around in a frenzy.

SUPERIMPOSE: "LIMA, PERU 1969"

EXT. COASTAL ROAD - DAY

A car speeds through a desolate road, flanked by sand dunes and the endless expanse of the ocean. The driver's destination is far from Lima, as they leave the city behind in their dust.

INT. BLACK CAR - DAY

Miguel sits in the back, annoyed. He looks out at the deserted beach that disappears in the distance.

His mother, CARMEN COSTA, 40, a refined vain woman, sits next to the driver RAÚL, 42, a dark-skinned Mestizo.

CARMEN

Sit up straight.

Miguel reluctantly obeys her.

CARMEN

And that face?

MIGUEL

Really?

Carmen ignores him.

MONTAGE - LIMA/YUNGAY

The rugged coastline transforms into towering mountains as the car speeds ahead. Scenery shifts rapidly, with glimpses of rustic villages, farmlands, and grazing livestock flashing by. A roadside memorial adorned with a cross and artificial blooms marks a poignant pause. Vendors peddling their wares dot the route.

INT. BLACK CAR - DAY

Carmen tries to be nice. Miguel ignores her.

CARMEN

You will see. It won't be so bad. It's a beautiful place. It was here that I met your father... perhaps spending some time together far away will do us both some good.

MIGUEL

As if we spent a lot of time together
at home!

CARMEN

Excuse me, where are we?

RAÚL

We are entering Yungay, ma'am!

EXT. YUNGAY - MAIN SQUARE - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: "YUNGAY, PERU 1969"

The car rolls into town, where a blaring loudspeaker ECHOES ANNOUNCEMENTS through the main square. Imperial palms and vibrant flower beds surround a charming colonial-style fountain, as the vehicle makes its way through the quaint streets.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

The car takes them out of town.

INT. BLACK CAR - DAY

CARMEN

Son, you can be indifferent to many
things... But not to this.

MIGUEL POV

The road curves, and the majestic snow-capped Huascarán emerges. Its glacier glistens against a backdrop of stormy skies, shifting from silver to shades of grey, interrupted only by brilliant beams of light.

BACK TO SCENE

Miguel is actually impressed.

MIGUEL

What mountain is that?

RAÚL (O.S.)

It's the Huascarán, Sir.

Miguel turns to watch the mountain through the back window as they move away.

EXT. CISNEROS HOUSE - DAY

The car pulls up to the main house, situated on a narrow boulevard with imperial palm trees on either side. The gardens surrounding it are a lush, vibrant green.

Miguel gets out of the car and looks around.

RAÚL

I will help you with your luggage,
young man.

Miguel ignores him and enters the house.

INT. CISEROS HOUSE - LOBBY - DAY

Miguel looks around not impressed. They are received by a couple of domestic employees, FÁTIMA, 35, and MARIANA, 28.

FÁTIMA

Good afternoon! You must be Mrs.
Cisneros Jr.

Carmen immediately begins to give them orders.

CARMEN

Take the bags. Where is Mr. Cisneros?

MARIANA

At the plantation, ma'am!

Miguel ignores them and enters the house.

EXT. CISNEROS HOUSE - FRONT GARDEN - DAY

Miguel wanders through the garden and spots two stunning alpacas grazing amidst a group of resting guinea pigs. As he approaches, the younger alpaca and Miguel exchange inquisitive looks.

EXT. CISNEROS HOUSE - BACK GARDEN - DAY

Miguel strides towards the back of the house, bypassing busy servants, lost in their menial tasks. Despite his efforts to dismiss it, the young alpaca trots along at his heels. He arrives at a quaint wall with a barred gate, that signals the boundary of the property, and clambers over it.

EXT. CISNEROS HOUSE - HILL AT THE BACK OF THE HOUSE - DAY

Miguel stands atop the hill, gazing at the awe-inspiring view

of the distant Huascarán. He turns to leave, only to find the young alpaca peering at him over the wall.

EXT. DIRT ROADS - DAY

Miguel goes down the winding paths. He stops abruptly.

MIGUEL POV

A mountain cat studies him coldly through the undergrowth before it furtively disappears.

EXT. CISNEROS PLANTATIONS - DAY

Miguel passes a group of peasants seeding the grounds. In the distance, he recognizes his father, ENRIQUE CISNEROS, riding his elegant stallion, rushing around, shouting orders.

ENRIQUE

I told you to open the eastern
floodgates! Don't you know the
difference between East and West?
Dammit boy!

Miguel flees. He doesn't want to be seen.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

Miguel strides towards the town, his boots thudding against the dusty road. A pair of farmers approach him with their plow oxen, heading in the opposite direction. As a bus barrels past, leaving a choking trail of dust in its wake, Miguel shields his face and continues on.

EXT. MAIN SQUARE - DAY

Miguel slumps onto a bench, his eyes glazing over with boredom as the NEW WAVE MUSIC blares from the LOUDSPEAKER. He watches the flurry of activity in the town square with a dull ache in his chest.

Suddenly, his attention is stolen by a beautiful girl on the second-floor balcony of a grand colonial house. CAMILA, only seventeen, elegantly brushes her long hair. Miguel's breath hitches in his throat as he becomes entranced by her beauty. His infatuation is shattered when Camila catches him staring, and quickly disappears inside the house.

EXT. OUTDOOR MARKET - DAY

Miguel explores the market.

MONTAGE - OUTDOOR MARKET

A) SELLERS ANNOUNCE their products.

B) The market is a sprawling outdoor kitchen, with women cooking over braziers and kerosene stoves.

C) A vendor interrupts his sale to offer Miguel his goods, but Miguel refuses.

D) Two women prop up the colorful skirts of an elderly Indian woman, creating a makeshift privacy screen as she relieves herself in a corner.

E) Two policemen seize a vendor's goods.

MIGUEL POV

Two girls, NUNA MALLQUI, 17, and ÁNGELA CHENG, 16, sell fabrics at a stand. Ángela holds a baby lamb.

ÁNGELA

Mister, would you like to see a blanket...?

BACK TO SCENE

Miguel looks at them sideways and walks away.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

Miguel watches the horizon. He is tired and sweaty. He looks on both sides of the road, there are no cars.

MIGUEL

Unbelievable!

He stomps on the ground.

A cow looks at him inquisitively.

MIGUEL

What?!

The cow simply... looks at him.

Miguel kicks a stone disconsolately.

MIGUEL

Ouch! DAMNIT!

EXT. SMALL DAM NEXT TO THE RIVER - DAY

Miguel comes across a SHAMAN, age 50, walking towards him. The shaman hums a tune in Quechua while pushing a llama laden with various ceremonial tools, offerings, and witchcraft paraphernalia. They lock eyes with curiosity and hostility.

EXT. CISNEROS PLANTATIONS - DAY

Miguel trudges on, his skin blistered by the blazing sun. He comes across the same group of farmers huddled around the floodgates of an irrigation canal, but this time they're in a state of panic. Piercing screams of agony and concern fill the air. A worker's hand is trapped in the machinery, and he writhes in pain, on the verge of passing out. The rest of the workers look on in horror, at a loss for how to help. Raúl approaches running.

RAÚL

Somebody, pass me the pickaxe!
Quickly! We must break the gears!

(to another man)

Elias, get a shovel! I need to pry it
open!

Enrique arrives, jumping off his horse in movement, with dexterity. He recognizes his son, but ignores him.

ENRIQUE

What happened here?

RAÚL

His hand is caught in the gears. We
need to break...

The men arrive with tools in hand: shovels and pickaxes. Raúl takes hold of the pickaxe, ready to strike the hatch. But Enrique intervenes, grabbing his arm in protest.

ENRIQUE

(furious)

What are you doing?! Are you crazy?
You'll flood the crops, don't you get
it?

RAÚL

But...

ENRIQUE

Go fetch the tools! I will dismantle
it without damaging it.

RAÚL

They are behind the house. There is no time.

ENRIQUE

AM I BEING CLEAR! Nobody is going to damage anything here. Get the tools! Now!

The men gape at Enrique in shock, barely concealing their contempt. Raúl bolts towards the house, deeply embarrassed. Miguel stands frozen in horror as Enrique confronts him.

ENRIQUE

You! To the house! You have nothing to do here! We'll talk later.

Miguel sprints towards the house, his mind tormented by the agonizing screams of the injured man.

EXT. CISNEROS HOUSE - OUTDOOR PATIO - NIGHT

Mariana sets the soup pot on a garden table, adorned with kerosene lanterns casting a warm glow. Miguel sits across from his father, still reeling from the gruesome field mishap.

ENRIQUE

Did you both had a good day?

Enrique nods to Mariana who serves him.

ENRIQUE

Sorry for not being able to greet you personally.

Carmen eats indifferently.

CARMEN

We were not expecting any special reception.

ENRIQUE

(to Miguel)

I believe you visited Yungay today, right? It's a nice town, isn't it?

CARMEN

Why you don't have a television? And how come there is no drinking water?

ENRIQUE

We had a problem with the pump, but it will be resolved in a couple of days. And honestly, better than drinking water from the well, is spring water from the Santa River, right into your glass.

Carmen slams her glass of water on the table, her disgust palpable. Miguel meets his father's gaze with defiance. Enrique puts down his utensils, picks up his napkin, and tosses it onto the table.

ENRIQUE

You were expelled because of your erratic behavior. That won't be tolerated in my house. Am I making myself clear?

Miguel still looks at him inflexible.

ENRIQUE

After a few days in the countryside even your mother will learn something.

CARMEN

It won't be necessary, I don't plan to stay long.

ENRIQUE

Good! Things are easier when you are not around. He will start school tomorrow.

Miguel is caught off guard.

ENRIQUE

Did you think you are on vacation here? The Santa Inés is an excellent school. All the kids from the good families around here go there. Anyway, you're lucky I could get you in, after what you did... and in the middle of the semester.

Miguel sinks in his chair.

ENRIQUE

Be ready at seven, Raúl will pick you up.

MIGUEL

What happened to the man at the plantation?

ENRIQUE

He is fine. Don't need to worry about him. Focus on your studies.

EXT. YUNGAY VALLEY - DAWN

The sky begins to lighten, the muted shades of pink and sandy yellow seeping over the dark valley like a soft, gentle veil. Dawn is approaching.

INT. BLACK CAR - SUNRISE

Miguel bounces in the car's backseat, jostled by the rough ride over the country road's pockmarked surface. Raúl, his driver, takes him to school. The car barrels past Nuna, coating her in a thick cloud of dust.

EXT. SANTA SCHOOL INÉS - DAY

Miguel steps out of the car and gazes up at the old colonial mansion that serves as his new school. He notices the uniform-clad boys milling about the main square, and realizes that he's the only white kid in sight. He feels self-conscious and out of place. Suddenly, a hand lands on his shoulder, belonging to another white student who offers a friendly greeting.

EDUARDO CAMPOS, 18.

EDUARDO

You are Miguel, right?

Miguel looks surprised. Eduardo extends his hand.

EDUARDO

The news travels fast. Eduardo Campos, nice to meet you!

Miguel shakes it and sighs.

The BELL rings.

INT. SANTA INÉS SCHOOL - VERANDA - DAY

As they walk towards their classroom, Eduardo points out where everything is, the principal's office, the laboratories, the classrooms, etc.