

WINESKIN

by

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EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAYBREAK

Darkness turns into a pale, grey mist.

Through the fog, lit by the faint light of dawn, we just about see the outline of a long white wall, standing on a rocky hill amongst cypress trees.

A tall black iron gate crowned with a spiky cross divides the long wall into two halves.

A rooster crows.

Three scrawny wild dogs are sniffing around, steam coming out of their nostrils - it is icy cold.

Their ears perk up to the cracking of branches in the distance and the crunching of gravel being ground underfoot.

The dogs pause all movement, still and alert. They hear grunts and guns cocking coming closer and they scatter, hiding behind the cypress trees.

From NICOLÁS' (30s) POV:

We see the backs of SIX GAGGED MEN stumbling forward. Their arms are behind their backs - wrists bound together with rope.

a SMALL GROUP OF YOUNG MILITIAMEN walk behind them, pushing forward with the tip of heavy rifles. They wear dark green uniforms - felt caps, trousers and shirts held together by black leather cartridge belts.

It becomes clear that what we are seeing through Nicolás' eyes is a group of six HOSTAGES, (himself the seventh) going to be executed. Then the raspy sound of men struggling to breathe.

Frenzied glimpses of the hostages as they are forced on. Sweat. Fearful eyes. They struggle to breathe through their sealed mouths.

They are seemingly civilians - one wears ripped dark pyjamas under a blazer jacket, a book protruding from its side pocket. Another a dirty all-in-one long johns. The rest are wearing white shirts, brown corduroy trousers and dusty espadrilles.

Nicolás' frenetic procession is heading towards the blurred wall of the graveyard, seen through the gaps of a storm of body limbs.

The hostages crash into one another, searching each other's eyes for a fleeting moment of connection.

The wall gets bigger. We are getting closer and closer to it - suddenly it comes into focus. It is covered in small round holes, like those made by bullets.

Nicolás' gaze wanders into the holes, following them up the wall, then past it, towards the grey sky.

Then -

The thunder of a hundred bullets scares a flock of birds, which disappear quickly into the foggy clouds.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD'S WALL - DAY

The seven civilians lie on the icy ground.

Some of the bodies are facing up, lying on their arms with their tied hands underneath them. Others lie on their sides - fresh blood pooling under them.

The militiamen in the firing squad lower their rifles - light clouds of blue smoke rising from the muzzles.

The COMMANDER of the army (40s, insignia pinned on his shirt and blue beret) stands to the right of the line, holding a pistol. He waves it to the militiamen.

They walk to the bodies and poke them with their rifles before checking their pockets for valuables - their faces hidden by the thick fog and the speed of their movements.

COMMANDER

If it moves, shoot it.

Nicolás gets pocked in his lower back. He is half buried underneath one of the bodies. His head, with his mouth gagged, is cushioned face down onto the ground by the bleeding man's back and arms.

Blood trickles down from his protruding brown corduroy trousers onto his espadrilles.

A sharp, distinct metallic ticking brings him into consciousness. He opens his eyes to the devastation unfolding around him.

He sees broken spectacles on the ground. A gale of black army boots. Hands removing a body's blazer. A book by Federico García Lorca is thrown to the ground and stepped on.

He tries to move his head, unsuccessfully. The metallic sound drumming loud into his ear. A pair of black boots fill Nicolás' sight.

The ticking stops as one of the militiamen turns the dead body that covers Nicolás around, exposing a wristwatch over his tied hands - the source of the ticking.

The militiaman's hands move fast, unfastening the wristwatch and pocketing it. Then he looks over his shoulder.

The commander stands on one side, watching the army vulture the bodies. He is wielding his gun - ready to give a coup of grace or punish any betrayal.

With the speed of a lightning bolt the militiaman gets something blue out of a pouch in his belt then puts it into Nicolás' right trouser pocket.

Nicolás notices this.

We hear a clippety-clop. On the far right, the shape of a donkey pulling a cart appears through the mist, led by a FARMER (60s).

COMMANDER
(to the militiamen)
Five minutes break, no more.

The farmer stops near some rocks by the side of a hill. He unloads spades from the cart and drops them on the ground, then unpacks the donkey's saddles - sandwiches and a wineskin.

The commander and the militiamen approach him, grab a sandwich and sit together on nearby rocks.

All but one: JOAQUÍN, (36). Blurred by the fog, he sits smoking, facing the carnage.

The wild dogs are seen behind the cypress trees, stalking.

The rooster crows again. The day is a touch brighter.

EXT. GRAVEYARD, MOMENTS LATER - DAY

A snuffling sound.

A dog is sniffing Nicolás' face. The dog steps back and moves on to sniff another body.

The other dogs approach - shy of Nicolás at first, but then, excited by the smell of fresh meat, they get into a feeding frenzy.

They tear away flesh from a wound on the body with the pyjamas, snarling at each other. Their sharp, dripping teeth glow in the mist.

This attracts the attention of the militiamen, who look on, sandwiches in hand. Disgusted, they turn their backs on the scene and carry on eating.

All but Joaquín.

Nicolás wiggles until he frees himself from the body on top of him. He looks into the dead man's eyes, wide open - then looks into the unsteady eyes of the blood-drunken dogs.

Nicolás checks his own body cautiously. He has several bleeding wounds - side, arms, leg and the top of his head. His face and his gag are tinted red.

He then checks the militiamen. They are eating and drinking from the wineskin, lifting it high into the sky, and letting the wine stream fall into their eager mouths.

Then they pass the wineskin around, each repeating the same drinking manoeuvre.

All but Joaquín.

Nicolás crawls and hides behind the busy dog pack and the dead bodies. The dogs ignore him, too busy with their breakfast.

He examines his surroundings. The men sit far on the right, harboured by the fog. The left-hand side, by the graveyard's main entry, is clear.

Nicolás rises to his feet aided by the wall, and lurches towards the graveyard door. The dogs disperse, growling.

The militiamen notice the sudden movement and look back. One of the dogs is dragging a big chunk of human meat.

Nicolás hides in the recess by the graveyard's wrought iron gate. His heart is pounding, his breathing laboured.

He peers carefully around the corner.

The blurred militiamen stand up.

COMMANDER

Let's get on with it. It's getting messy.

They share a last round of wine from the wineskin. One of them gets up and grabs a spade.

The dogs are back ravaging the bodies. Two of them fight for the same piece of meat, growling. The militiamen's attention is on the dogs.

The militiaman with the spade tries to scare them. The dogs snarl back at him.

The other militiamen watch - their attention is on the gruesome scene.

Nicolás takes a deep breath. It is now or never.

He pushes the wrought iron gate open with his body just enough to squeeze through, then disappears into the graveyard - graves and crosses floating around him in the fog.

Shots are heard.

EXT. GRAVEYARD, MOMENTS LATER - DAY

Two of the militiamen are chasing the dogs away with their rifles. The rest approach the butchered dead bodies of the civilians, slow and reluctantly.

The turning of a wooden wheel on gravel - the commander walks alongside the donkey and the cart, stopping right in front of the black iron gate.

COMMANDER
(to the militiamen)
Hurry, they need you at the
trenches.

Two of the men grab the first body - the man in the pyjamas. As they carry him to the cart an ink pen falls from a pocket on his shirt.

The commander grabs the pen and studies it. A smirk appears on his face. He puts the pen in his pocket - a trophy.

COMMANDER
(to the body in pyjamas)
Here is to a blood honeymoon.

The commander then sees the book on the ground nearby. He points his finger at two of the militiamen.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
Clean the ground. No stain of blood
must be seen. Get rid of
everything.

The two militiamen grab spades and start clearing the site.

He watches the men work for a moment, clearing the site, carrying the bodies and dumping them on the cart.

He then counts the bodies. Six.

He walks to the cart and counts them again, pushing the bodies aside to gain a view of their faces - still six.

He looks around and notices the graveyard's gate partly open. He walks towards it and investigates - blood stains the side and the metal bars of the gate, its trail disappearing into the misty cemetery.

He walks back to the cart hastily. Joaquín and another army man are piling the last of the bodies onto it.

He faces the group of men.

COMMANDER
Which of you has a bad aim?

Joaquín's mahogany eyes stare at the commander, wide-eyed behind a thin curtain of fog.

EXT. GRAVEYARD BACK WALL - DAY

An unkept, naked stone wall, half covered in overgrown vegetation.

Nicolás is on top of the wall, on his side - mouth gagged, hands tied behind his back, bleeding.

He throws himself off the wall, the thick high grass and bushes softening his fall.

He rolls down the sloping hill until he comes to a stop.

He then contorts his arms until he can reach his right pocket and struggles until he gets something out. He forces his head around and looks at it.

A small blue folding knife.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE, MOMENTS LATER - DAY

A landscape of almond and olive tree groves sprawling side to side. The fog has started to lift. Birds sing far above in the sky.

Nicolás, now ungagged and hands-free, limps across the trees, struggling above the thick layer of weeds and low bushes. He is weak and hurting, leaving a trail of blood behind him.

He comes to an old olive tree, growing thick and contorted from a big lumpy tree stump. He sits on it and stretches his weak legs.

He tends to his wounds. He unties the gag that he has pulled down onto his neck. He takes his shirt off and tears it into rags with the small blue knife.

He presses the gag on the open wound on his leg to stop the bleeding and ties it tightly with a rag.

He then bandages the rest of his open, bleeding wounds - first the left side of his torso, then the arms and finally the head.

The rooster crows in the distance.

Nicolás speeds up, hastening a knot around his head. He then resumes his escape, staggering away across the olive grove.

INT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

The sun is working hard to break through the obstinate fog, which still lingers in clumps around the graves.

Animated birds watch the militiamen at work below, searching for Nicolás behind every grave - their rifles ready to shoot.

One of them notices something on the graveyard's back wall.

Closer now - a bunch of stone crosses leaning against the wall. The militiaman sees blood stains over them, clearly used to climb the wall.

The militiaman signals to the others to come and join him. They do so.

The men look up.

All except Joaquín.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The first rays of sunlight break through, bathing the landscape in amber light.

The militiamen are raiding the olive and almond groves, following Nicolás' blood trail.

They reach the ancient olive tree, where a puddle of blood is sinking into its roots. Beyond it, the blood disappears.

The commander kneels and runs his index and heart finger through the blood, then rubs it with his thumb.

He scans the fields.

COMMANDER

Disperse, in groups of three.
Joaquín, you come with me.

The army divides into groups.

Joaquín, the commander and another soldier break off and run across the fields.

A cottage appears on the horizon on a rocky hill. The commander makes a sign with his hand.

Joaquín swallows hard.

JOAQUÍN

That's the mattress maker's farm. I
know them well.

They head towards the cottage, zigzagging across the trees until they reach the bottom of the hill.

Joaquín rushes up the rocky sloping terrain, heading towards the cottage.

The commander and the militiaman look at each other, then part ways towards each side of the rocky hill.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

An OLD WOMAN, (80s) sits cradling a baby by a lit fireplace, her arms swaying side to side gently.

A knock on the window alerts her. She turns around to see Nicolás' bloodied face behind the glass. She gasps.

The old woman runs from the room, clutching the baby, terrified.

EXT. OUTSIDE COTTAGE, CONTINUOUS - DAY

Nicolás staggers towards the front door of the cottage.

An OLD MAN (80s) comes out of the door. He sees Nicolás half naked, shaking and breathing with strain.

Nicolás points towards the fields behind him.

The old man looks across the olive groves, understanding.

He grabs Nicolás by the arm and walks him to a barn by the side of the cottage.

INT. BARN, CONTINUOUS - DAY

Dozens of sheep baaing, filling up the space.

The old man leads Nicolás to a pile of straw across the herd of sheep on a corner against the wall. Nicolás sits there shaking, looking around for a hiding space.

The old man takes out a blanket from the inside of a pair of saddles hanging from a wooden peg on a wall.

He hands it to Nicolás, then leaves.

Nicolás covers himself with the blanket, still shivering.

INT. BARN, MOMENTS LATER - DAY

Nicolás is sitting on the pile of hay, enjoying a moment of peace - the sheep bleating, sunshine rays seeping from gaps in the roof bathing the entire place.

Then -

Scanning over the sheep he sees the shadow of a man with a rifle outside the stable's entrance.

Nicolás buries himself in the pile of hay.

Joaquín appears at the door, putting out a cigarette. He is not in a hurry.

He enters the barn and places the butt of his rifle on the ground, resting his hands on the barrel. He stands there, scanning the barn while curious sheep come to greet him.

He hears footsteps outside.

He composes himself, standing very straight and placing the rifle on his shoulders.

He heads out as if he's been searching.

EXT. BARN, CONTINUOUS - DAY

Joaquín walks brashly towards the commander and the militiaman, who are approaching, and moves passed them.

JOAQUÍN
(cocksure)
Just wool.

The commander and the militiaman are about to leave when they hear a noise. They turn around to see the old man heading towards the barn, carrying a loaf of bread, a piece of cheese and a wineskin.

The commander and the militiaman look at Joaquín.

They run to the stable.

INT. STABLE - DAY

The sheep baaing loudly as the commander and the militiaman search everywhere.

The militiaman reaches the haystack and starts poking with his rifle.

Joaquín enters.

The militiaman is prodding where Nicolás is hiding. Noticing something he reaches with his hands, uncovering Nicolás.

Nicolás scurries, trying to escape.

The commander and the militiaman cock their guns, pointing at Nicolás' back.

Nicolás stops. He turns around.

We see his eyes now - Mahogany brown, wide open behind a thin curtain of sunlight.

Joaquín looks at Nicolás.

The commander turns his gun around, aiming at Joaquín, whose rifle is lowered.

COMMANDER
Make good soldier.

Joaquín walks to face Nicolas, wielding his rifle, trying to disguise his shaky hands.

Sweat is running from his forehead onto his clenched jaw. A tear holds back inside his eyes.

Nicolás and Joaquín are face to face, each reflected in the other's black pupils.

NICOLÁS
Never tell mother.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Two shots are heard.

A flock of birds take flight, disappearing into small dots high above the morning sky.