

LIVING ON HOPES & DREAMS

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Two strangers living on hopes and dreams meet by chance and forge a brief but profound bond that leaves both their lives changed forever.

Open on New Mexico mountains in February 2021. Introduce MICHAEL, 62, living in his aging Denali SUV, intensely working on his laptop. Frustrated, he yells out to God about his struggles getting his startup Tymmbber off the ground. He debates an offer to relocate to South Dakota for a job, but his heart is set on staying in New Mexico.

While making a sandwich at his custom-built workstation, Michael hears a distant yell. He searches his campsite then climbs a hill for a broader perspective. Before turning away, he spots a man in the distance, stumbling his way.

Michael watches the approaching man get blasted by a rogue dirt devil. Undeterred, he continues the climb to Michael. Now face to face, MIGUEL, early 30s, explains in basic English that he's a migrant seeking asylum, separated from his group and lost for days with no food or water. Michael is torn about getting involved, but with few other options he invites Miguel back to his camp for a sandwich and water.

While Michael makes sandwiches Miguel takes notice of the unique workstation attached to the rear of the Denali. Michael explains the RAAK is a prototype for one of his Tymmbber products, designed for outdoor life.

Sitting by the fire, eating their sandwiches, Miguel shares that he is from Guatemala, land of trees - a far cry from this southwest desert, land of no trees. Then Miguel starts asking questions about Michael's situation, living in his truck out in the middle of nowhere, noting the craftsmanship that Michael has put into the considerable stonework of his campsite.

Uncomfortable with all the questions, Michael only admits he picked this particular spot for the best views of sunrise and sunset, as well as the solid bandwidth. Excited at the possibility of communicating with his world, Miguel pulls out his cell phone, steps a little too close to Michael, and asks if he has a charger.

Suspicious on the rise, Michael is cautious while digging through a duffel filled with electronic gear to find his charger.

Michael mentions that once his phone is charged, time to move on. Down closer to the highway, an easier location for the drivers to find him... No problemo.

The conversation turns to family. Their sisters being the prime reasons for both of them being where they are. With heartfelt emotion, Miguel announces his girlfriend is pregnant. One of the reasons he needs to make it to America, to provide for his new family.

Growing tired of Miguel's friendly chatter, Michael leaves Miguel to recharge his phone by the fire and retreats to the sanctuary of his truck to get some work done.

While lost in thought, emails start popping up on Michael's laptop in response to his original message: Guess what happened to me today!? Family and friends agreeing that Michael is crazy and should send Miguel away, ASAP!

After another too-close-for-comfort moment, Michael decides it's time for Miguel to leave and scoots him out of the campsite with denied protests and a map to the highway.

Concerned Miguel might return with angry intentions, Michael hides his sharp tools. Sends out another email, stating Miguel has left the camp. An interesting experience for him to ponder on his ongoing journey.

While Michael makes dinner, Miguel emerges from the dark. Shaking and tearful. He begs to stay a little longer. Empathizing with Miguel's determination, Michael gives in. Allows Miguel to stay until he's picked up later that night.

But drivers from Tucson to El Paso are leery of driving into the mountain range, due to Border Patrol. After a restless night, Michael wakes to find Miguel still sitting by the smoldering fire.

Over the next couple of days, Miguel is in constant contact with his family and his handlers. Michael continues working on his Tymmer projects and fine tuning the RAAK. While together, during meals and wood-gathering, they talk about the hopes and dreams for their futures. Despite being dissimilar in obvious ways, the two become more similar as the conversations get deeper.

Miguel discloses he's on his way to Miami, where a friend has a restaurant job for him. If he succeeds, he'll be the first of his family to make it to America. A badge of honor in his hometown community. If he is able to create the better life he's working toward, he plans to open a restaurant called "Esperanza" (Hope).

Michael speaks of his ex-wife and four children, and his dreams to help guide more people outdoors. Where the endless perfection of nature creates and inspires a connection to a better life.

After hearing about some of Miguel's recent struggles, Michael calls a couple of friends for advice. Mateo, a proud Mexican-American with a large and lucrative farming business, sternly warns him not to get involved. Danny, a construction worker supporting an extended family, immediately agrees to host Miguel if needed. Michael is surprised by Mateo's cold reaction and touched by Danny's generosity.

Michael and Miguel begin bonding over their shared drive to fulfill their dreams. They discuss the complicated issue of immigration. Michael shares his empathy for those seeking the American Dream, but underlines the strain it puts on the system. Michael advises Miguel that once in America, he needs to work hard, stay out of trouble, and help others along the way.

On Day 3, Michael takes Miguel and three jugs of water to a tiered set of shallow pools he's constructed for a group of birds that captivated his attention. Michael relays his special encounters with the birds and how they came to change his perspective on nature. His revelation that the beauty of life is life itself.

Once again, Miguel is impressed by Michael's creativity and skill. In this magical grove, Miguel recounts an anecdote of wisdom shared by his grandfather in regards to three pitchers filled with Faith, Love and Patience.

Walking noticeably closer, they return to the campsite to find another vehicle parked by the Denali. Michael is confronted by Officer Drapes, Border Patrol. Drapes inspects the camp and questions Michael. Michael is nervous but truthful, not mentioning Miguel. Miguel hides, preparing to run if he needs to. Drapes eventually drives off, leaving Michael relieved but quick to snap at Miguel.

While preparing dinner, the propane stove runs out of fuel. Supplies are running low. Michael still hasn't heard back on his business proposal. During dinner, and a six-pack, Miguel is informed the rest of his group has made it to Miami, without him.

With this new development, Miguel admits that he actually left the group on purpose when the others were doing nothing more than arguing with each other. Impatience and the fear of being caught and sent home on his third and final paid attempt to cross the border set him off on his own selfish mission. He breaks under the heavy weight of guilt, and is surprised by Michael's understanding and relatability.

Michael encourages Miguel to keep chasing his dream but emphasizes the importance of the opportunities in America. Working to become a legal citizen and contributing to society.

Miguel mentions the latest drivers are willing to pick him up at the Wal-Mart in Las Cruces and he will be leaving in the morning.

Later that night, as the temperature drops and the wind howls outside the rocking Denali, Michael goes to Miguel and encourages him to come sleep in the truck.

Miguel relishes the comfort of the truck and asks if it's okay to call his girlfriend to say good night. Michael remarks he's checking emails for a reply to his business proposal. Miguel lands a line that strikes Michael to his core... When they don't respond, they're not interested... Sweet and simple. Crushing.

Michael starts off the fourth day with a deep sigh, but after Miguel surprises him with a special breakfast made with heartfelt gratitude he decides to take Miguel to WalMart, where he usually shops for supplies.

While preparing to leave, it is obvious the two have built a unique friendship. They clean up as best they can and are set to go, but the engine doesn't start. Thanks to a desert rat that has been using the engine block as shelter.

Once on the road, an extremely bumpy road, the vastness of the mountain range becomes more apparent. So does the danger, as they pass LAURA MAE investigating a migrant death on the side of the road.

On the highway, Miguel receives a disheartening message. His friend wants to wire him money, in Michael's name. He needs the money desperately, but Michael is not keen to cross the line more than he already has. Ultimately, he agrees.

Trying hard not to look nervous, they enter WalMart under Covid protocols. Michael searches for Money Services while Miguel wanders off to a kiosk of sunglasses. Like a kid in a candy shop, Miguel has a hard time focusing on their true mission.

KARYN, the Money Services clerk, is suspicious of the duo at first sight. She questions Michael, avoids eye contact with Miguel, and completes the transaction with a surliness that would make most men crumble.

After a quick shopping spree, they spend hours in the truck waiting for Miguel's driver to arrive.

They go for lunch at a local Mexican restaurant, where they narrowly avoid a small convoy of police and Michael determines it's time for Plan B. They set off to the small town of La Mesa, to his buddy Danny's house.

They pass the Rio Grande and nearly have a car accident when Miguel asks if Michael will be seeing his children while in the city. Michael admits with a heavy heart that he has been keeping his living situation a secret from his kids, not wanting to interrupt their young adult lives. Miguel reminds him that family love is strong enough for honesty.

Arriving in Danny's quiet neighborhood, Michael assures Miguel he'll be in good hands and explains that Danny and his brother Diego are raising their sister's two young daughters. The sister taken by a cancer from an unknown source that was currently wiping out the female population in the area.

Everyone has a story, including Fernando, who greets Michael and Miguel with Danny and Diego in the bright kitchen of a sad home still holding onto the mother's spirit. Fernando shares the horrific story of his crossing before the angelic young faces of Ana and Sofia appear in the doorway.

A mysterious truck enters the driveway. Miguel jumps up and practically runs out the door, but not before a warm send off that includes colorful artworks from the girls.

An emotional moment between Michael and Miguel takes place in the drive before Miguel dashes off and is whisked away into the darkness of night.

Michael reflects with Danny on the unlikely crossing of their paths, reignited perspectives, and hopes for Miguel's future.

Inspired to keep chasing his own dreams, Michael gazes out at the sunrise from his latest campsite overlooking a shimmering lake. As a hang glider swoops by overhead, a renewed sense of hope swells in his heart. The road ahead is long and winding, but he knows now he's not traveling it alone.

Epilogue:

Michael later learns Miguel was caught and deported 3 weeks after they parted. But months later, he hears a fourth attempt was more successful and now Miguel is working hard to make all of his American dreams come true.