

EL HALCÓN

Written by

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Log Line:

A Hispanic ex-gang member and tattoo artist must stay out of trouble in order to help bring his mother back to the U.S., life takes a turn when he crosses paths with his new neighbors who consist of an abusive father and his sweet 12-year old son who turn out to be his new neighbors.

Plot Summary:

Born and raised in the toughest streets of Los Angeles, Fernando De La Cruz, a tattoo artist and ex-gang member, will do anything to stay out of trouble to bring his immigrant mother back to the United States. Forced to grow up in poverty amidst gang violence, Fern turns to his art as an escape from the harsh reality of his upbringing. However, life takes a turn when he crosses paths with his new neighbors, who consist of an abusive father and his sweet 12-year old son, JP.

FADE IN:

BLACK SCREEN.

SFX- Cocaine sniffs, beer bottle clinks, drunk laughter in the background.

1 INT. GANG DEN - NIGHT 1

Fluorescent, grungy, lighting casting on a table of beer bottles, cocaine, deck of cards.

FERN, 20, cholo, seated at the table finishes dividing equal lines of cocaine with a credit card. He takes a long snort of cocaine, sits back in his chair, lost in thought.

REY, 20, cholo, walks up to Fern and hands him a beer bottle. Fern takes a sip and stands up. They both nod in agreement and walk over to the back of the room.

CHICHO, 18, newly gang initiate seated alone prays with a rosary in his hand. Chicho finishes his prayer. Chicho slowly looks up to Fern and stands.

Fern gut punches Chicho, who collapses to the ground. Chicho endures a beating.

Fern stops and walks to the table as Rey continues to abruptly beat Chicho. Fern places a bucket of water and rag on the table. He wipes his bloody knuckles with a rag.

Fern questioning his actions looks up to the heavens.

2 INT. BENNY'S TATTOO PARLOR - NIGHT 2

The tattoo parlor is nearly empty. Half of the lights have been turned off. A crooked business license with the name of Benito De La Cruz hangs on the wall.

FERN, 24, ex-cholo, tattoos on his arm, fixes the crooked business license and cleans up the tattoo work station with an rag. He grabs his appointment book and sits on his tattoo chair. Fern looks at his appointment book and crosses out the last name on the list, scheduled from 7-9pm. He closes the book and begins counting the day's CASH earnings with his legs crossed on top of his cabinets.

BENNY, the shopowner and Fern's uncle, in his mid fifties, dressed casual but clean, walks out from the back office. He straightens out a couple things at the front desk then checks his watch.

BENNY

Oralé, I'm out for the night. You okay to lock up?

FERN

(still counting)
You got it, boss.

BENNY

Okay. And Fern, the rent for your station is due in a couple weeks. No se te olvide mijo.

FERN

Ya sé, Tío. I know. Don't worry.

BENNY

You said that last time. How are you supposed to take over for me if you can't even pay rent on time. No me hagas que le diga a tu mamá.

Fern stops counting and waves him off with a wad of cash.

FERN

(chuckles)
No mames, Tío. Now, get outta here! You're making me lose count.

Benny laughs and nods then walks out the door. The BELL attached to the door RINGS. Fern finishes counting. He gets up from his seat and slings a backpack over his shoulder, takes a last look around then heads for the door.

3 EXT. BENNY'S TATTOO PARLOR - NIGHT 3

Fern, wearing his backpack, locks up the door from the outside. Muffled party music, cars driving by, and sirens are heard in the distance. He finishes locking up, puts in his headphones and begins walking home.

4 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD BASKETBALL COURT/PARK - NIGHT 4

Fern passes the basketball court on his way home with an esquite (mexican corn cup) in one hand, while nodding his head to the music. It's empty and dark.

5 EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

5

Fern walks into his apartment complex. On his way in, Fern runs into an old friend, CHICHO, 22, a gang member, teardrop tattoo next to his eye, leaving the complex. Fern puts his headphones away.

CHICHO

Aye carnal! Party in the barrio,
you comin'?

FERN

Aye, appreciate it carnal, but
I'mma kick it here for tonight.

CHICHO

Come on, bro. Come have some
drinks. I got a couple grams we can
split, too.

Chicho jokingly pulls out a small clear bag of cocaine and wiggles it in Fern's face.

FERN

Nah, Chicho, you know how I get.
I'm tryin' to stay outta trouble
esé. I gotta bring back mamita back
to the States.

CHICHO

Chalé, aye but I'mma slide thru for
that tattoo in couple weeks foo'.

FERN

Word. Stay safe loco.

Fern shakes Chicho. Fern continues to walk to his apartment.

6 INT. FERN'S STUDIO APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

6

Fern walks into his bedroom and puts his backpack on the bed. He walks over to his closet and reaches up to the top shelf and pulls out a wooden box from behind a stack of clothes.

Fern takes a seat at the edge of the bed and opens the box. Inside are LETTERS and POSTCARDS from his mom, some PICTURES from his childhood, some with his father scratched and torn out, a small falcon FIGURINE, and an ENVELOPE.

He grabs a photo of his mother and runs his thumb over her face. Fern kisses the photograph and places it on his nightstand next to a small STATUETTE of the Virgin Mary.

Next to the statuette is a letter from IMMIGRATION SERVICES. He looks at the letter then focuses on the DATE: AUGUST 30th.

FERN

One more month, Mamita.

He takes out the envelope that reads: "MAMA- MEXICO" and places \$200 inside it from his wallet. He puts the envelope back in the box, closes it, and turns off the light from the nightstand.

7 INT. FERN'S STUDIO APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 7

Fern wakes up to loud THUMP coming from outside. He looks out the window and sees JP, a young, 12 year old, caucasian boy picking up the spilled contents of a moving box: his basketball trophies, medals and uniforms.

8 EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY 8

Fern comes outside wearing a white t-shirt and basketball shorts, and helps JP pick up his things.

JP

Thanks, mister.

FERN

No worries, lil homie. What's your name?

JP

JP.

FERN

You new around here, JP?

JP

Yeah... it's just me and my dad.

Fern and JP clean up the rest of his things. JP glances at Fern's falcon tattoo on his arm. Fern catches him looking. He notices a bruise on JP's wrist but doesn't say anything. Instead, he extends his arm out.

FERN

It's cool right?

JP smiles and lets his guard down. He puts the box down on the floor gets a closer look at Fern's arm.

JP

Is that an eagle?

FERN (CHUCKLES)
It's a falcon, actually. Un Halcón.
Designed it myself.

JP
You do tattoos?

FERN
Yeah I work at my uncle's shop a
couple blocks past the park.

MIKE, 40, JP's father, is seen in the complex parking lot standing on the bed of the truck, smoking a cigarette, holding a box at his side.

MIKE (YELLING)
Hey! Get your ass back out here and
fuckin' help.

Fern is taken aback by Mike's abrasiveness. Mike waits impatiently outside, angry.

JP
(to Mike)
Coming!

JP moves his box of belonging next to his apartment door. He starts to run towards the parking lot but stops and turns back towards Fern. Fern stands by his apartment door, cracking it open.

JP (CONT'D)
Thanks.. um..

FERN
Name's Fernando, but my homies call
me Fern.

JP
Right! Thanks Fern, see ya around!

Fern chuckles and smiles as JP runs back to the parking lot.

9

INT. FERN'S STUDIO APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

9

Fern, sits at his art desk near the front window working on a tattoo sketch to cover up his 187 tattoo. He looks at his "187" tattoo on his left knuckles and rubs it with his thumb. He looks lost in thought, as though recalling a memory. He takes a deep breath and goes back to his drawing.

Music quietly plays in the background. As he continues his sketch, he hears yelling coming from next door.

He turns the music down. Fern sits at his desk and peers through the window.

MIKE (O.S.)
Get back here, you ungrateful
little shit.

SMASH. The yelling next door continues. Small, painful cries are heard through the thin walls of Mike's apartment across the way.

Fern sits at his desk looking straight to the wall. The sounds of JP's abuse continue in the background. Crying. Yelling.

Fern flinches with every strike. His eyes tear up in anger. He sits there frozen, watching and listening in on an all-too-familiar situation.

SFX V.O. FLASHBACK of Fern's father yelling and Fern's mother cries and screams are heard.

SMASH. Fern snaps out of the SFX Audio Flashback. He clenches his fist, breaking his pencil. Fern gets up in rage heads to the door. As he's about to exit, the noises stop. Fern breathes for a moment, and stands there, as if waiting for the noise to start again. It doesn't. Shaking a little with adrenaline, he slowly steps away from his door, and walks towards his bed.

Fern shaken up, lays on his bed with eyes wide open.

10

INT. BENNY'S TATTOO PARLOR - DAY

10

Fern sits at his tattoo station finishing up with a client, SUNNI. He applies a saniderm to the her arm.

SUNNI
(Flirty)
Stop by my work when you're off,
drinks on me.

Sunni slowly grabs Fern's arm. Fern casually changes the subject.

FERN
(chuckles)
Just make sure to keep it clean,
and remember, no scratching this
time Sunni.

SUNNI

Fine, next time I better see you there.

Sunni stands up and grabs her purse. As she walks out, JP appears in the doorway.

FERN

JP?

JP approaches Fern at his tattoo station. Fern notices JP has a black eye.

FERN (CONT'D)

Jesus. Come here. Sit down.

Fern sits JP down on the tattoo chair.

JP

I'm sorry if I'm bothering you. You said you worked here and-

FERN

Aye, it's okay. You wanna tell me what happened?

JP sits there staring down at his lap. Fern notices him struggling to find the words to say. Fern already knows. He changes the subject.

FERN (CONT'D)

It's alright. You don't have to... Say, you wanna know what cheers me up all the time?

JP's demeanor changes. JP sits on the tattoo chair swaying his legs back and forth.

FERN (CONT'D)

Close your eyes and put your hands out.

JP closes his eyes and puts his hands out. Fern reaches to his mini fridge and grabs a strawberry paleta (mexican ice pop). Fern places the paleta on JP's hands.

JP

What's this?

FERN

Oh come on, tell me you've had one of these before.

JP shakes his head and opens the paleta. He takes a lick and tilts his head to the right. JP shakes his head continuing to eat his paleta.

Benny comes out of the back office but stops when he sees Fern showing JP his things.

Fern chuckles and shows JP his tattoo gun, ink bottles, tattoo samples and sketches.

Benny smiles then walks to his work station. Fern nods to his uncle as JP continues looking at Ferns things.

11 EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

11

Fern walks home with a rag on his shoulder and an empty laundry basket placed by his side.

As he continues walking home, he spots Mike plastered on the bed of his truck, smoking a cigarette and beer bottles are seen laying everywhere.

Mike notices Fern. Mike stands up and heads over to Fern, while still smoking a cigarette.

Sweaty and eyes blood shot red.

MIKE

Aye amigo, neighbor!

Fern stops and lays his empty basket on the floor.

MIKE (CONT'D)

It's Fern, right? You don't like me very much, do you? Is it because I'm not a mex-i-can-o like everyone else in this goddamn place?

FERN

It's not that.

MIKE

Ha, well.. say, you got any flakes on ya? Or maybe you can call one of your homies for a deal.

Mike places his hand on Fern's shoulder. Fern notices Mike's scabbed up, bloody knuckles. He brushes him off, nudges Mike back.

FERN

Listen, man, I don't do that no more. But clearly you do.

Fern gestures to Mike's hand.

FERN (CONT'D)
Is that why you hit your kid?

MIKE
What the fuck did you just say?

FERN
You heard me. I know what you did.

Mike takes the cigarette out of his mouth and flicks it on the floor. Mike shoves Fern back a little but he barely moves.

MIKE
You don't know shit!

Fern pushes him back. Mike stumbles.

FERN
Explain his black eye then huh
tough guy.

Mike regains his composure. Mike gets in Fern's face.

MIKE
Stay the fuck away from him or
we're gonna have a problem. You
understand me, ya' fuckin' beaner?

Fern heads towards his apartment door.

Fern takes a deep breath midway to his apartment to try and contain his rage. It doesn't work. He angrily grabs onto his laundry basket and throws it to the floor.

12 INT. TATTOO PARLOR - DAY

12

Fern hands an envelope of cash to his uncle Benny.

FERN
Here you go, as promised.

BENNY
Chalé, Fern. Maybe I won't have to
call your mom after all. Speaking
of which, how're you feeling about
her interview?

FERN

Excited. Nervous. No sé. After she got deported, and everything I went through with you know who... What if it don't work out? I don't wanna get my hopes up.

BENNY

You don't want to be disappointed.

FERN

Exactly tío.

BENNY

Mira Fern, I saw how you were with that little boy the other day. You're not the same angry kid you used to be. Eres muy listo mijo and you work hard. You even live on your own now. No te agüites, things will work themselves out. They always do.

Fern nods in agreement.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Now get outta here before I make you clean something naco.

FERN

(chuckles)

Thanks Tío, te veo mañana!

Fern heads for the door. The bell rings as the door swings open, then closed.

13

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD BASKETBALL COURT/PARK - EVENING

13

Fern, with his backpack, walks home from work. On his way, he spots JP shooting hoops at the basketball court by himself. Fern approaches him.

FERN

Yo, I bet you I can make a shot from half-court.

JP

Oh yeah?

Fern steps onto the court. JP passes him the ball. Fern takes a shot and misses. JP takes the rebound.

JP (CONT'D)
Ha... My turn!

JP smiles, dribbles the ball to half court, takes a shot and sinks it. When he raises his arms up, Fern once again notices bruises on JP's inner arm. JP without a care, proudly laughs in celebration.

FERN
And the crowd goes wild! Aight, I see you lil homie!

JP
You're just saying that.

FERN
Nah, I'm a man of my word. Never will lie to you, especially when it comes to something you love. Come here, I wanna show you something.

Fern takes his backpack off and they both take a seat on a bench. Fern pulls out a sketchbook from his bag. He starts flipping through the pages and stops on a drawing of a falcon with the DATE JANUARY 8, 2006 on the RIGHT CORNER of the page.

FERN (CONT'D)
Notice anything?

JP
Hey, that's the same falcon you have on your arm!

FERN
That's right. When I was a kid, my mom told me that these birds represent strength, freedom, and ambition...

JP looks lost in thought. Fern flips to the next page: a drawing of his mother and father arguing.

FERN (CONT'D)
You see, my parents, they used to fight. And my dad... he would drink. A lot. And when he did, he would do terrible things to me and my mother.

JP
Where is he now?

FERN

He did a lot of bad things. Got himself locked up for good.

JP

And your mom? Is she okay?

Fern flips the page. On the back he circles the state: CA and MEXICO. He draws an arrow pointing from CA to MEX.

FERN

Because of my dad, she was taken away to Mexico. But soon she'll be coming back, so I've been trying to stay out of trouble.

Fern draws a big question mark in the middle of the page.

FERN (CONT'D)

Look, what I'm trying to say is, I know what you're going through. And it's not your fault. You just gotta try to find something that brings light into your life. Whether it's basketball, or drawing... Whatever it is, you have to stay strong.

JP nods his head.

FERN (CONT'D)

And, listen, if you ever need help, you call me, and I'll be there.

JP

Hey, maybe I'll get a tattoo just like yours!

Fern playfully tousles JP's hair.

FERN

Not until you're older! Now, let's see what you got!

Fern gets up and challenges him to a one-on-one game. Fern throws the ball to JP. JP still sitting on the bench, catches the ball.

Mike drives by the park and spots them on the court. Mike gets out of the truck and slams the door. Fern and JP stop and look at Mike.

MIKE
(yelling)
Is this wetback bothering you
again?

Concerned, Fern approaches Mike to diffuse the situation. Mike gets out of the car pulls a bat from the back of his trunk.

FERN
Nothing's going on here, boss, we
were just-

JP
Dad, stop, I'm fine!

JP runs up to stop his dad, but Fern motions with his hand to stay back. This aggravates Mike even more. Mike takes a swing at Fern but misses. Fern pushes Mike against the car and chokes him with his forearm. Fern manages to grab the bat, steps back and sets up to hit Mike.

MIKE
I know you wont do it, you fuckin'
pussy!

FERN
You're messing with the wrong vato.
You don't know where I come from or
what streets I run.

As he's about to swing into Mike's face. Fern glances at JP, tears in his eyes. He drops the bat.

FERN (CONT'D)
(to Mike)
You're lucky.

Fern starts angrily walking away and JP follows, tugging at Fern's arm.

JP
Fern! Fern! Please, Fern come back!

Mike's anger amplifies. With Fern's guard down, Mike quickly pulls a knife, comes up behind Fern and stabs him in the back. JP watches in shock.

JP (CONT'D)
No!

Mike pulls the knife out and Fern falls to the ground. Hands shaking from shock and adrenaline, Mike stares at Fern's bloody body laying on the basketball court. JP runs to the car.

MIKE

I warned you.

Mike runs back to the car but before he can get in, JP quickly locks the doors and dials 911 on the phone.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Open the goddamn doors, JP! Now!

JP cries uncontrollably with the phone pressed firmly against his ear. Mike shakes the car door knob as JP cries on the phone. Fern lays on the basketball court staring at the JP and Mike in the parking lot. Fern slowly closes his eyes.

14 EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY 14

Fern walks into the apartment complex with crutches. His facial hair has grown out a bit after being in the hospital for several days.

As he waddles in towards his apartment, he notices an EVICTION LETTER taped to Mike's apartment door. To his surprise, the door is cracked open.

15 INT. MIKE'S APARTMENT - DAY 15

Fern walks in the apartment. It's nearly empty. Fern stares straight ahead and spots the living room full of empty boxes and a beaten up sofa.

Fern walks inside the kitchen.

A couple full trash bags sit on the floor near the cabinets.

As he walks in further, he spots a folded piece of paper on the kitchen counter. He opens it and sees a crude drawing of a falcon signed "To Fern".

His eyes start to well up. He takes the sketch, folds it back up and puts it in his pocket and walks out of the apartment, shutting the door behind him.

TITLE - 6 YEARS LATER

16

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - NIGHT

16

The tattoo parlor is nearly empty. Half of the lights have been turned off. A business license with the name Fernando De La Cruz hangs on the wall.

Fern closes up his tattoo shop while he is on the phone with his mom. He turns off the back lights and walks to his RECEPTION counter.

FERN

(On the phone)

No cocine jefecita, la voy a llevar a cenar.

FERN (CONT'D)

¿Y de postre? Quiere pastel, helado o galletas?

He turns to the last page of his APPOINTMENT BOOK and as he's about to close it, he reads an uncrossed line at the bottom, that reads: "9:30 P.M.- Justin Pierce". Confused, he reads the line again.

FERN (CONT'D)

Mamá, te hablo en un rato.

Suddenly, the bell at the front door rings as it opens. Fern looks up and sees a tall silhouette. As the figure walks closer, the light illuminates his face. It's 18-year old JP, wearing a college basketball hoodie, holding a strawberry ice-cream in his hand. Fern's eyes widen.

FERN (CONT'D)

JP?

JP

Hey boss. How about that tattoo?

Fern gets up and walks towards JP to get a better look at him. He places his hands on JP's shoulders and looks him up and down in disbelief. Fern's eyes start to tear up as he smiles at him. JP hugs Fern tightly.

Recent photos of Fern and his mother line up on wooden shelves. A picture frame of Fern and his mother holding citizenship papers next to small American/Mexican Flags.

We close in on the crude falcon drawing.

FADE TO BLACK.