

The Lost Son Emerges

“Belonging isn’t where you’re born —
it’s where you’re welcomed.”

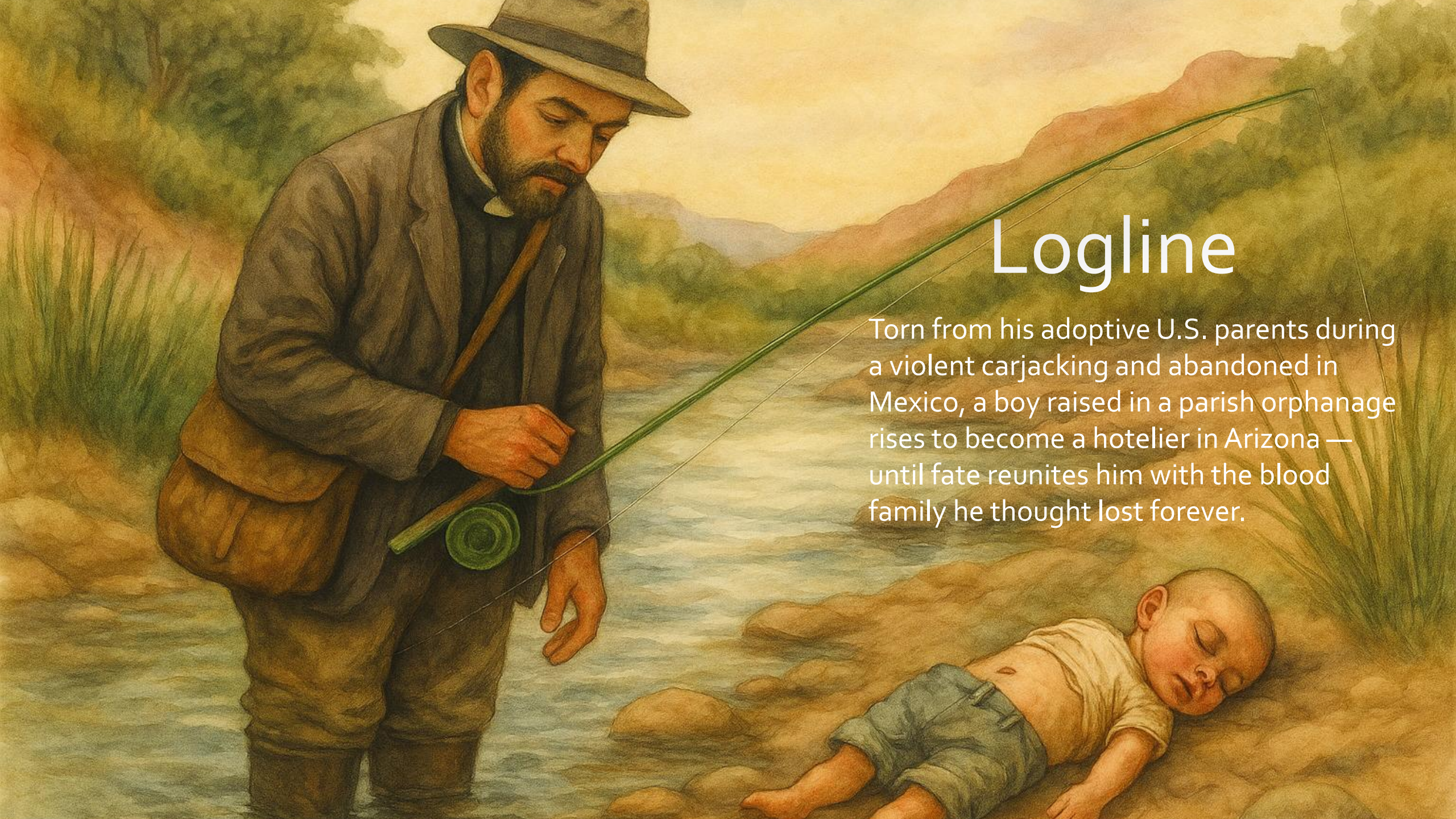


Featured Screenplay

WRPN.TV Screenwriters Wall of Fame

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An oil painting of a man with a beard and a hat, wearing a brown jacket and waders, fishing in a river. He is holding a long fishing rod. In the foreground, a baby is sleeping on the rocky bank. The background shows a river flowing through a landscape with green hills and a warm, hazy sky.

Logline

Torn from his adoptive U.S. parents during a violent carjacking and abandoned in Mexico, a boy raised in a parish orphanage rises to become a hotelier in Arizona — until fate reunites him with the blood family he thought lost forever.

Synopsis

Surrendered at birth and abandoned at the border, Roberto Arreola grows up in the shadows of a Mexican orphanage. Mocked for his golden hair but sustained by the compassion and guidance of Sister María and Father Hildago, he learns resilience early — rescuing two abandoned infants and becoming their protective older brother. To help the orphanage survive, he collects bottles for spare coins, scrubs dishes, and makes hotel beds, always giving half his earnings back. His journey begins not with privilege, but with purpose.

Determined to build a future, Roberto pursues an education in Arizona, struggling with language and loneliness until he finds belonging at the university's campus inn, rising to student manager and graduating with confidence and self-esteem. In Tucson, he climbs through hotel ranks before reviving a historic inn and earning a reputation for rare empathy and vision.

Yet the past he never knew still waits in silence: a secretive adoption, a violent carjacking that tore him from his adoptive parents, and birth parents divided by grief and concealment.

The Lost Son Emerges is a sweeping yet intimate film about identity, resilience, and the universal search for home.



Why This Story Matters Now

In a fractured world, belonging and identity are universal struggles. A U.S.-born child raised as an outsider discovers belonging by offering it to others. For him, hospitality is more than a career — it's a metaphor for healing, dignity, and welcome.



Themes That Drive the Story

- + **Belonging & Identity** – Adoption, abandonment, and the need to belong.
- + **Choice & Consequence** – One decision ripples across decades.
- + **Crossing Borders** – Between cultures, nations, and families.
- + **Hospitality as Healing** – Hotels as symbols of dignity and welcome.
- + **Resilience & Redemption** – Rising from abandonment to rebuild family and hope.



Act I – Surrender and Abandonment

- + **Surrender** – April, an ASU college student in Yuma on an internship, makes the heartbreaking choice to secretly surrender her newborn.
- + **Carjacking** – A violent carjacking rips the infant from his adoptive parents.
- + **Abandonment & Rescue** – Left in a remote tributary by the car thieves, he is discovered and saved by Father Hildago.
- + **Orphanage Life** – Raised in a parish orphanage under the care of Father Hildago and Sister María, he grows up in faith and discipline, learning the value of hard work.
- + **Protector & Purpose** – Roberto becomes guardian to Amelia and José, two other abandoned children, learning that family is chosen, not just blood.



Act II – Building a Life Beyond Borders

- + **Crossing Over** – Roberto crosses into the U.S. and enrolls at Northern Arizona University (NAU).
- + **Hospitality Training** – Working entry-level jobs at the Inn at NAU, he rises to student manager through persistence and grit.
- + **Calling & Dignity** – He discovers a calling in hospitality, finding dignity through service and leadership, and aspires to become a hotelier. After graduation, he begins his career as a housekeeping supervisor at a Tucson hotel.
- + **Family Bonds** – Though he loses touch with Amelia and José, the bonds of their shared childhood remain unbroken.
- + **Maria's Presence** – Maria Torres, a classmate who helps him with notes, offers a glimpse of connection — though Roberto keeps his distance.



Act III – Belonging and Truth

- + **Restoration & Success** – Now a Tucson hotelier, Roberto revives a forgotten inn and expands his influence across Arizona. His relationship with Maria Torrez blossoms after they see each other at church for the first time since college. She becomes a source of deep emotional connection, and when he takes her to visit the Casa Hogar orphanage where he grew up, Roberto finds the courage to propose.
- + **Unknowning Connection** – Tony Thomas hires him to rescue his three hotels, including the struggling Sedona Red Rock Haven Inn — never realizing Roberto is his son.
- + **Secrets Revealed** – Decades later, April, his birth mother, confesses she surrendered their child in college. Tony learns the truth only after decades of marriage. Devastated, he hires a private investigator, and the trail ends with the revelation of the hijacking.
- + **Reunion & Redemption** – At a Christmas celebration at the Red Rock Haven Inn, Roberto embraces both his blood family and chosen family, uniting past and present.



Epilogue – Casa Hidalgo

- **A Legacy of Belonging** – On the borderlands of San Luis, Roberto opens a boutique hotel named Casa Hidalgo, honoring the priest who once saved him.
- **Design & Meaning** – The property blends adobe tradition with modern design — a symbol of resilience and hope.
- **Passing the Torch** – Miguel, once a dishwasher under Roberto, now serves as General Manager, mentoring others.
- **Rooted in Community** – Staff are hired from *Casa Hogar de la Esperanza*, giving new generations both work and belonging.
- **The True Legacy** – With Father Hildago now passed, Roberto carries his spirit forward — creating places where no one feels lost again.



Target Audience

- † **Fans of Emotional Dramas** – Viewers who connect with heartfelt stories of identity, adoption, belonging, and family.
- † **Hospitality & Travel Community** – One in ten people worldwide are employed in hospitality and tourism; the hotelier arc resonates deeply within this global industry.
- † **Multicultural & Cross-Border Audiences** – Audiences drawn to stories bridging the U.S. and Mexico, embracing themes of culture, resilience, and shared humanity.
- † **Youth & First-Generation Students** – High school and college students, especially first-generation, who see themselves in Roberto's journey of struggle, education, and triumph
- † **Faith-Based Viewers** – Audiences inspired by themes of redemption, compassion, and service rooted in spiritual values.
- † **Latino Communities** – Particularly powerful for Latino viewers, who will see their cultural realities reflected authentically in family, migration, and perseverance.



Tone & Style

- **Heartfelt & Emotional** – A story of abandonment, resilience, and belonging that invites empathy at every turn.
- **Inspirational** – Though rooted in hardship, the narrative arcs toward healing, hope, and human dignity.
- **Authentic & Cinematic** – Grounded in real cultural and historical detail, with sweeping cross-border settings (Yuma, San Luis Río Colorado, Flagstaff, Tucson, Sedona).
- **Intimate & Character-Driven** – Small acts of service, faith, and connection carry as much power as the larger dramatic events.
- **Touches of Humor** – Roberto's humility and everyday interactions offer moments of levity, reminding us that even in struggle, humanity shines through.
- **Redemptive & Poetic** – A visually rich drama that blends realism with metaphor, culminating in reconciliation, legacy, and hope.

Comparable Films



Lion (2016) – Lost child's global search for family → Oscar-nominated, \$140M box office.



Roma (2018) – Cross-border cultural drama told with intimacy → 3 Academy Awards.



Green Book (2018) – Dignity and belonging across divides → Best Picture winner.



CODA (2021) – Family and identity in marginalized spaces → Sundance hit, Best Picture winner.

Main Characters

A



B



C



D



E



F



- A. **Father Hildago & Sister María** – faith as guardianship.
- B. **Roberto** – resilient, empathetic, visionary hotelier.
- C. **Maria** – college classmate whose kindness plants early hope, later returning as his partner.
- D. **Amelia & José** – orphanage siblings, each on their own journey.
- E. **April** – birth mother, haunted by secrecy and loss.
- F. **Tony** – birth father, stoic but deeply regretful.

Casting Vision

A

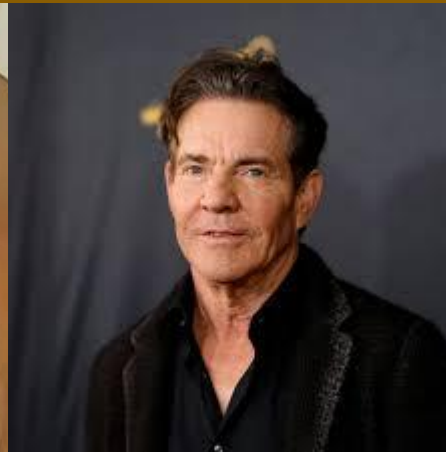
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A. **Roberto Arreola (Adult)** – Jack Quaid

B. **Father Hildago** – Demián Bichir Nájera

C. **Sister María** – Justina Machado

D. **April Thomas (Birth Mother)** – Michelle Pfeiffer

E. **Tony Thomas (Birth Father)** – Dennis Quaid

F. **Maria Torrez** – Francia Raisa



Format Potential

- † **Feature Film (120 min)** – Powerful standalone drama.
- † **Limited Series (6–8 episodes)** – Expanded journey across childhood, career, and reunion arcs.

Why I'm Telling This Story

- **Personal Connection** – Delivered eyeglasses to an orphanage in San Luis Río Colorado, Mexico, where I first witnessed the struggles of abandoned children — inspiring this story.
- **Hospitality Expertise** – Degree in Hotel & Foodservice Management; founding faculty member of the School of Hotel & Restaurant Management at NAU; extensive experience in hospitality management through consulting, teaching, and professional practice.
- **Mentor & Educator** – Guided generations of hospitality students — many first-generation and international — who have gone on to become successful hoteliers and entrepreneurs.
- **Author & Innovator** – Published textbooks and articles on hospitality; recipient of the John Wiley & Sons Innovation in Teaching Award from the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education.
- **Commitment to Access & Equity** – Secured a \$5 million workforce development grant from the Governor of Arizona and a \$375,000 U.S. Department of Education grant to expand opportunities for underserved populations, including women prisoners.
- **Vision & Belief** – Compelled to write this story because it speaks to our times: given opportunity, anyone can succeed — regardless of background. At its best, hospitality is a bridge between people and nations, fostering dignity, belonging, and cultural understanding.
- **Research & Authenticity** – Grounded the script in real history and context through research on the events portrayed throughout the story.



A universal story of
resilience, family, and the
healing power of hospitality.

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