

THE MYSTERY OF MONTEZUMA'S TREASURE

"An archaeologist discovers that his old high school history teacher spent ten years on a treasure hunt based on a paper he had written over twenty five years ago."

FADE IN:

INT. HOSTEL - EL VERDE, MEXICO - DAY

In a black dress and heels, NATALIA PEREZ (50), a dark haired beauty with smoldering brown eyes, walks across the dull wood floor. She picks up a phone and dials a number from a note she holds.

NATALIA

(thick Spanish accent)

Hello, is this Michael Hodges?

(beat)

I have a message for you from Hal McCormick. He tell me if anything happen to him I should call you.

INT. ARCHAEOLOGY DEPARTMENT - ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

MICHAEL HODGES (45), unkempt yet handsome, sits on his messy desk, bewildered expression on his face. An incessant BEEPING noise comes from the phone he holds in his hand.

INT. HOSTEL - DAY

Natalia glides down the rustic, paint chipped hallway. Michael follows, watching her every move.

NATALIA

You was very close with Hal?

MICHAEL

Actually, no. I haven't seen Mr. McCormick in over twenty five years. Do you know why he wanted me here?

NATALIA

No, I only follow his instructions. He gave me the note, then he died.

She unlocks a door and holds it open for Michael. He slips passed, plops down his duffel bag and looks around the sparsely furnished room.

NATALIA

There are fresh linens on the bed and towels for the shower.

He curiously approaches a large wooden trunk in the corner.

MICHAEL

Is this Mr. McCormick's trunk?

NATALIA

Yes. And he leave the key for you.
I never opened it, I promise.

She hands him the key. It's obvious he's overwhelmed.

NATALIA

I'll give you privacy now. See you
at dinner?

Michael nods, she smiles. As soon as the door closes he rushes to the trunk. He nervously fumbles with the lock until it finally opens with a loud CREAK. It's filled with papers and maps.

He pulls an envelope off the top of the pile. It's addressed to him. He opens it.

MCCORMICK (V.O.)

Hello Michael. I'm sure you're
wondering why I sent for you.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Natalia, Michael and several other guests, dine together at a long wooden table. The guests drink, laugh and talk (MOS). Michael is a million miles away.

MCCORMICK (V.O.)

I retired from teaching fifteen
years ago. Sadly, my wife died
shortly after.

The group holds up their glasses to toast, Michael joins half heartedly. Natalia watches him, their eyes connect.

MCCORMICK (V.O.)

To keep myself alive, I needed a
purpose. Your paper made a strong
impression on me. I felt your
theory had a lot of promise. So I
sold my house and left for Mexico.

INT. BEDROOM

Michael sits on the floor next to the contents of the trunk. He reads a report protected by a clear cover, the title reads: "THE MYSTERY OF MONTEZUMA'S TREASURE BY MICHAEL HODGES - MAY 5, 1981". Next to the title in red ink is an A+.

McCORMICK (V.O.)

I based my quest on the trail you described.

Michael puts the paper down and smiles.

MICHAEL

That was a fucking brilliant paper.

He laughs at himself. A light TAPPING on the door startles him. The door opens a crack and Natalia peeks in.

NATALIA

Hope I'm not bothering you. I've made some dessert. Thought you might like to join me.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The fireplace gives the room a warm glow. Natalia and Michael sit on the floor and finish their dessert.

MICHAEL

I live alone but I have a small apartment. It must be hard taking care of a place like this, alone.

NATALIA

Sometimes. And sometimes lonely.

Natalia takes Michael's empty plate. She stands and offers her hand to help him up. For a moment they stand face to face. He's captivated, she knows it. She smiles.

NATALIA

Help me with the dishes?

INT. KITCHEN

Standing side by side, Michael washes while Natalia dries.

MICHAEL

So he was here for two years and
never mentioned what he was doing?

NATALIA

No. He was very private. He just
say never look in the trunk and
never move the trunk.

Michael suddenly stops. He stares straight ahead.

MICHAEL

Never move the trunk?

He puts the dish down and quickly walks out. Natalia turns
off the water and follows him.

INT. BEDROOM

Michael moves the large trunk. The metal corners scrape
the wood floor. He kneels down, studies the planks then
pulls up a loose one, easily.

Natalia watches as Michael puts his hand into the hole. He
reaches his arm all the way in and feels around.

MICHAEL

Do you have a flashlight?

NATALIA

Yes. I'll be right back.

She runs out of the room. He pulls his arm out and stares
at the hole. Natalia rushes in and hands him a flashlight.

Michael shines the light inside. He lies belly down,
reaches deep inside and pulls out a canvas bag. With child
like excitement he opens it.

They both GASP. In his hand are two small jewels. He
catches his breath and opens a paper that was also inside.
It's a map of El Verde with a big red X over an area.

NATALIA

What does this mean, Michael?

Michael is frozen.

MICHAEL

Oh my GOD. He found it.

EXT. DIG SITE - DAY

Construction vehicles and trailers are lined up outside an area that's been cordoned off. Inside the area, a crew carefully excavates. Michael walks by with a Foreman.

MCCORMICK(V.O.)

I traveled North from Mexico City, following the Verdes River. If I got a strong reading I'd concentrate on that area for a while.

Dirt billows around a red pick up truck that pulls into the lot. Natalia gets out. She waves to Michael. He sees her and waves back. She gestures toward a trailer. He nods.

MCCORMICK(V.O.)

My strongest reading came when I reached El Verde. I knew I was on to something. But my health is deteriorating, and I fear my adventure is coming to an end.

INT. TRAILER

Natalia sits on the messy desk of this mobile office. Hung on the wall behind her is a blueprint, the title "MCCORMICK - HODGES DIG SITE".

Michael walks in. He smiles and walks toward Natalia.

MCCORMICK(V.O.)

In truth, my treasure was the hunt itself, not the jewels. I hope you find your treasure Michael.

Natalia wraps her arms around Michael. They kiss.

FADE OUT