

United States/México, July 11, 2001

BORDER WORK

Brownsville, Texas, to San Diego, California. One way. Tijuana, Baja, California, to Matamoros, Tamaulipas, plus that extra mileage to the beach on the Gulf of México. The other way. In between are more badges than you can find at an international scout jamboree: state police, local police, county sheriffs, border patrol, agricultural inspectors, INS in more ways than one; if you know how to look or want to find by just causing trouble, ATF, FBI, CIA, EPA, even the IRS; all sorts of Federales, not to mention Policía, subdivided by town and state, some of whom are and some of whom are not self-appointed. Did I mention the National Guard just doing field exercises on land and in the air? Did someone once say to Humphrey Bogart, "Badges? We don't need no stinking badges!?" Where is that man now, when we really need him? Stuck on celluloid in Hollywood. He could be here on the border, patrolling cultures to make sure they stick to each other more, cross freely into the peaks and valleys of each other's lives and lands, and send some badges packing. But he was a bandit. Wanted the gold, all the gold. So he and his compadres would fit right into border traffic and all the legal and illegal commerce that takes place behind the signs and the shanties: gangs for gold, gringos for gold, gold for gangs and gringos, gold for Mexican gringos, gold for American gringos, for Mexicanos, Mestizos, Norteños, and Tex-Mexers; gold turned to happy heads for chicos, chicas, cholo-punks, chopper riders, and low-riders with hairnets; for brokers, truckers, bankers, crankers, hookers, housewives, hackers, and hijackers, all in the chase, swirling around in the giant sucking sound, made not by NAFTA going south, but by the jet powered whoosh of white stuff going north, vacuumed up the collective nostrils of Los Estados Unidos twenty square truckloads at a time. White gold, Mamacita, good shit for breaking through the border of blocking badges, both ways; for helping a throwaway society sniff more to make more to sell more to dump more to sniff more, here and there; for putting yet another foot of poverty and stench on the heap of the Tijuana city dump, already full beyond the canyon where it began; for creating one more need for more badges, more supervisors of badges; for increased patrols between Nogales, Ciudad Juárez, Presidio, and Eagle Pass; for cracking further the cracks in the cultures that built this barbed wire snake of a border between them. But who cares? Cerveza, por favor. Estamos sentado aqui. We're not going anywhere. Show me your badge. I'll show you mine. Let's talk about coyotes. Coyotes never sleep. More beer. The snake cuts but always bends. Me vale madre, joven. More talk. I hear Tijuana gets hot this time of year. Me vale madre. So what?

Ivan Brady 2001

