



This is a true story, I am real, and I intend to tell you everything as I remember it. I was never poor, not wealthy by any means, but never wanting for anything. I always had what I wanted, but I always wanted more. I will skip past most of my childhood as the details are not pertinent to the story itself, this particular tale started when I was 12 years old. I was always an adventurous kid, never afraid to try new things, I was in trouble frequently but was well liked by everyone and extremely gifted so although I was always in trouble, I was rarely punished. I was able to be friends with many different "groups" of people, from the jocks to the gangsters, charm my way into any conversation, or out of any situation, one such friend we will call "G", was always a loud, arrogant bastard, but not without reason. His father was a 'Judicial' in Mexico, equivalent to a high ranking state police officer, and a drug kingpin in his own right. At the time he was responsible for up to 40% of the illicit drugs moving through this particular part of South Texas, a fact I would soon find out about first hand. G was always coming to school in different cars, expensive trucks, expensive and extravagant jewelry, and most noticeable to me, a pocket full of cash. It took a while for me to acknowledge it, and to gain his trust, but when the question burned too long in my mind, it found its way out, "where do you get so much money from, and how can I get some too"? He didn't answer right away, at first he could only say it came from his father, but my answer came soon enough, that very weekend I was invited to go to his home, and I accepted, wanting to see where this kid lived, HOW he lived. We met up and I got into his fathers' truck, a new truck, a nicer truck than I had ever been in, I sat in front with his father, who proceeded to ask me questions. Most of the questions were routine, where do you live, who are your parents, where are they from, but the questions turned to the money soon enough. He asked if I could swim, I said yes of course, then he asked if I was strong enough to carry 50lbs on my back, I said I believe so, and he asked if I really wanted to have money in my pocket too, I just nodded my head. At this point I looked forward and noticed that we were at the border between the United States and Mexico, about to cross south, and I was a little concerned but you wouldn't have known it. We stopped at a little road side taco cart and had food, all kinds of food and drinks, his father was impressed by my fluent Spanish, as up to this point he had only heard me speak English, and he seemed pleased and even laughed a bit with me and his son. After this, it was getting a little dark and the tone got more serious as we drove down a long winding dirt road alongside the Rio Grande River, for what seemed like hours, and found ourselves at a little warehouse building out in a small clearing of trees. When we got there G's dad got off and asked us to stay and then just as soon as he had left he returned with a backpack, and he placed it between us, looking at me seemingly to size me up. After about 40 seconds he spoke, telling me that if I were to swim across the river with this backpack, and turn it over to someone waiting on the other side, I would make 2000 dollars. At the time the most I had ever had was

a 50 dollar bill to call my own, 2000 dollars seemed like an impossibly large amount, and I was quick to agree without knowing or even considering the consequences.

I was showed to a spot on the river, given the backpack, and told to wait just on the other side for a truck that would flash its lights 3 times. This seemed odd since I wasn't unfamiliar with the area, and knew there was not a lot of car traffic there; why not just go to the first truck I see? The man explained about the border patrol, and how I should find a place to hide once I cross, and avoid the white and green Broncos at all costs. Fine, for 2000 dollars I can do this. I jumped in expecting it to be easy, the water was cold, the current was strong, at first I sank and was being dragged sideways, but soon I found strength out of sheer fear of drowning and pulled myself to the other side, losing sight of where I had entered the river and cut up from roots and debris in the water. As I crawled up the opposite bank my feet were getting stuck in the mud, my arms were numb from the cold or from the swimming I don't know which, and the 50lbs on my back felt like 500 to me. I finally felt dry dirt, past the thorny shrubs and sage brush, and I stopped to survey my surroundings and listen. Suddenly I was aware of everything around me, my ears perked up; I was hearing the wind in the grass, birds in the trees, things shuffling through the dense underbrush around me. I looked all around trying to see any sort of light or figures, when I saw nothing I decided to find a spot to sit and wait. I hid myself in a particularly thick part of the roadside and waited, it wasn't long until I heard the sound of tires on gravel, and I felt a sudden relief that I would soon be somewhere other than this and I moved to get up, stopping myself short and remembering not to run to the first truck I see. As I crouched down in the thick brush I saw headlights coming in my general direction, I held my breath and waited. The truck stopped about 40 yards from where I was hidden and a spotlight came out pointed to the side of the river, sweeping from side to side and then turning off. As the light dimmed the truck moved forward, and as it crossed my position I was able to make out the dark green stripe set against a white background, and the symbol of the U.S. Border Patrol, I had just narrowly been passed. Still not fully aware of what being caught would have meant, instead of fear I felt frustration at having to sit out there for hours, and that was when I heard it. At first there was a faint whistle, almost like a bird in the distance, then it became louder, more pronounced, and obviously not an animal, I peered into the dark in the direction of the sound and saw what looked like a flashlight. Instinctually I whistled back, trying my best to sound the same, and then the light stopped, and I saw it turn off, then back on, once, twice, then again, when that happened I made myself visible and waved my hands. There was a low yell and a truck came up the road seemingly with its lights off and pulled up next to me, someone stepped off the truck and took the backpack off of my back, and then the truck left. One of the men stepped out of the bushes and led me to a white crown victoria hidden in the trees, and drove me to a store nearby, where G's dad was waiting, with a handful

of cash and a big grin, and he only laughed when I went off on him about leaving me there for hours. He told me he really liked my attitude, and fearlessness, and he told me I would go far. This is how it started, 2000 dollars was more than I had ever seen, and it was not enough, I needed more and I didn't even know why.