

The Water's Memory

A found journal entry from the Alamo Sea, dated October 2025

I should have known something was wrong when **Martinez** climbed into my Mesa that first time.

We were crossing the shallow stretch near Sandy Shores when the water started creeping up the doors. I had the snorkel installed—proper job, both intakes sealed tight—so I kept pushing through. That's when the engine coughed. Just once. A wet, rattling sound like drowning lungs.

"You good, hermano?" Martinez said from the passenger seat.

I didn't remember picking him up.

The engine smoothed out, but my hands were shaking on the wheel. Martinez looked... off. His clothes were too crisp, his face too clean for someone who'd been waiting by the roadside in the desert. And when I glanced at him, really *looked*, there was water dripping from his collar.

"Where'd you come from?" I asked.

He smiled. "The water."

The thing about water crossings is they mess with your head.

Your brain knows the truck should die. Thirty years of driving tells you that engines and deep water don't mix. So when your snorkel keeps it alive—when the laws you've always known suddenly don't apply—something breaks loose in your mind.

At least, that's what I told myself.

After Martinez vanished (and he *did* vanish, mid-sentence, like smoke), the spawns started happening regularly. Every few crossings, someone new would appear in the passenger seat. Always after the water hit that critical point—seventy percent, maybe eighty. Right when my lizard brain screamed *you're going to stall* but the engine kept roaring.

A zombie in a tattered suit. I called him Lazarus.

A man in a tuxedo who smelled like formaldehyde. Victor.

Something that looked like Bigfoot but moved wrong, joints bending backwards. Wendigo, though that wasn't quite right.

They never spoke much. Just sat there, dripping, weapons resting in their laps. Shotguns. Rifles. Once, **a mime named Silencio** with an assault rifle who didn't make a sound even when I screamed at him.

The water was changing things. Changing *me*.

By the twentieth crossing, I'd stopped being surprised.

The clown—Chuckles—showed up during a night run, his makeup running in the rain, oversized shoes squeaking against the floorboard. He stayed for five fords before dissolving like sugar in the water. **Pogo**—the little monkey-man from that old movie—rode along for nearly a week, chattering in a language I almost understood.

I started keeping count. Marking tallies on the dash with a Sharpie.

The hallucinations (because that's what they were, *had* to be) became longer. Stronger. The water was teaching them how to stay. Each time I crossed deeper water and the engine should have died but didn't, reality bent a little more. The passengers became more real. More solid.

I could feel their weight in the seat.

Their breath fogged the windows.

Once, Lazarus lit a cigarette.

The worst part? I stopped wanting them to leave.

The desert is lonely. The long hauls between crossings felt empty without someone in the passenger seat. Even if that someone was a dripping corpse with a shotgun, or a mime who stared at me with dead eyes, or Wendigo leaving muddy footprints that didn't quite match the cabin floor.

They protected me, in their way. When bandits jumped me near the oil fields, Victor stepped out and fired three perfect shots. The bandits ran. Victor climbed back in, water streaming from his sleeves, and didn't say a word.

I was grateful.

I was losing my mind.

Same thing, really.

When the time was right, everything changed.

The engine did its usual stutter-and-recover at seventy percent. I felt the presence before I saw him—heavier than the others, older. When I looked over, **Lazarus** sat in the passenger seat. Not like before. This time he'd been dead *longer*. Flesh hung in strips. The smell made my eyes water.

"The count is complete," he croaked.

"What?"

"You've crossed us enough times."

The water outside started rising faster than it should. The Alamo Sea doesn't have currents, but I felt the Mesa being pulled sideways. Lazarus's eyes—clouded, white—fixed on mine.

"The water remembers," he said. "We all drown here eventually. Everyone who tries to cross where they shouldn't. The snorkel doesn't save you. It just delays."

The engine died.

Completely. No sputter, no cough. Just silence.

I looked down. Water was seeping through the sealed doors, climbing my legs with impossible speed. Lazarus was melting, his form running like wax, mixing with the flood filling the cabin.

"You've been drowning since the first crossing," his voice gurgled. "The snorkel broke then. You just didn't notice."

That's when I saw them.

Through the windshield, standing in water that was somehow waist-deep in the middle of the desert: **four figures**. Lazarus in his tattered suit. Victor in his tuxedo. Wendigo with its backwards knees. Chuckles, makeup perfect now, grinning.

They were thirty meters away. Waiting.

Each one raised their weapon—shotgun, rifle, SMG, carbine—and took aim.

"When the time is right," the melting Lazarus whispered, "we come to collect."

The first shot spider-webbed the windshield.

I woke up on the shore of the Alamo Sea, coughing brine.

My Mesa sat in shallow water twenty meters away, engine dead, passenger seat empty. The snorkel was snapped clean off at the base. Had been for a while, judging by the rust.

Tally marks on the dashboard. Too many to count.

Except I'd only been out here for three days.

I haven't crossed water since. I take the long way now, even if it adds hours. But sometimes, when it rains, I see Martinez standing by the roadside, thumb out, water streaming down his face.

And I know that eventually, I'll stop.

I'll pick him up.

I'll cross that water.

Because the thing about hallucinations is that they're *so much better* than being alone.

Journal found in abandoned Mesa (VIN: [REDACTED]) near Alamo Sea. Vehicle had been submerged for approximately 3 weeks. Water damage to engine suggests snorkel failure at initial crossing. No body recovered. Passenger seat contained one spent shotgun shell.

Case closed - accidental drowning. Victim likely experienced hypoxic hallucinations before death.

—Sandy Shores Sheriff's Department, Case #2025-1020

THE END