

## Chapter One – The battlefield

I'm sad and desperate to return to my family. My wife and my children are my existence. I miss them so much it hurts.

I feel *desesperado* after being in Tijuana for five days waiting for the precise moment to cross. We've been studying all the movement of *la migra* for four nights. There is a lot of vigilance on the beach. I have never seen anything like this.

We watch the Coast Guard crossing into international waters as if they own it. They come and go past the three little islands out in the distance. We see a little machine that looks like a *mosca* in the distance. We see planes that seem to come out of nowhere. They buzz overhead along the shoreline. From the distance we see a tiny little light but we can't tell what it is.

We hear the constant hum of helicopters above our heads. At night they shine spotlights in the water.

We get closer to the fence at sunset to see the movement up close. *El movimiento is hot*, just like a *habanero chile* pepper on both sides. On the Mexican side of the fence the *Federales* are everywhere. On the other side of the fence we see , *La Migra*. They are lined along the shore near Imperial Beach. We see agents with binoculars looking out into the water. We see other agents sitting in their white vehicles with green stripes like good little soldiers. They also take naps and have their faces buried in their cell phones. We are getting an up close and personal look at our *pista del Batalla*.

We want to jump in and make fun of these soldiers on the line. But this time, it's no joke. We have to have a plan and stick with it. We know they have their plan too, only they outnumber us and they have an arsenal of weapons and some of the most sophisticated technology in the world.

They've got ships, helicopters, heat sensors and more. We are well aware of this. My amigo, doesn't have as much on the line as I do. I mean, he has no wife or children to take care of, but life is life. I'm ready to play this hand knowing well I'm about to risk my life. But it's God's will. I miss my family. I'm nothing without them and I will do anything to be back in their arms again.

The only thing we have to depend on is ourselves. We have years of experience maneuvering the water, ducking the waves and diving deep with no tanks. It's our way of life and we respect the ocean way more than they do.

From the edge of the shore I look out to the choppy water. It's approximately two miles out to my death or my glory.

There will only be one tiny sliver of opportunity. We just have to find the right moment. The stopwatch in my head begins the moment I touch the water and I can only hope and dream it safely ends when I wake up at home in my own warm bed.

By the grace of God this will be one chapter in my story, not my end. I make the sign of the cross staring out into the water. I pray that my *santos* hear my plea.