The Devil’s Highway
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Part 1: Cutting the Drag
Chapter 1: “The Rules of the Game”

- Chapter 1 described the geography of southern Arizona discussed in the book and the historical figures that contributed to the development of this area. Also, the author discussed the spiritual myths of the “Devil’s Highway” area.
Part 2: Dead Man’s Sign
Chapter 2: “In Veracruz”

- Chapter 2 described the living conditions in Veracruz, Mexico. It also included a description of Don Moi Garcia, the recruiter for coyotes in northern Mexico. Finally, the chapter provided profiles of the individuals signing up for the next “exodus” from Mexico.
Chapter 3: “The Coyote and the Chicken”

- Chapter 3 included personal stories of the coyotes and their aliases. The chapter also continued with profiles of others signing up for the expedition. The chapter explained the importance and need for coyotes versus trying to cross the border alone or with a non-trained group/guide. It also discussed the connections of the Mexican smugglers with smugglers on the U.S. side as well as their system of hierarchy.
Chapter 4: “El Guia”

- El Guia means “the guides.” Chapter 4 had descriptions of the three guides who led the Wellton 26 into the U.S. as well as other guides such as Coronado. The chapter included examples of other people that had died while crossing the U.S./Mexico border, such as a story about a car accident in the Summer of 2002.
Chapter 5: “Jesus Walks Among Us”

- Chapter 5 included a description of the Yuma 14 survivors as they arrived at the hospital. The chapter also described a brief history of Mendez—how and by whom he was recruited to be a coyote.
In Chapter 6, Jesus and Maradona (his mentor) prepare to lead a group out of Mexico. They are targeting the area of Sonoita to cross. The group is arrested after crossing the border. Mendez is questioned by the Border Patrol, but released back into Mexico. Don Moi and his group left Veracruz for Sonoita but Don Moi headed home.
Chapter 7: “A Pepsi for the Apocalypse”

Mendez is ready to lead the Wellton 26 into the U.S. However, Maradona is nowhere to be found. Therefore, Mendez is given two guides to replace Maradona, a sign of how good Maradona must have been at guiding. After walking across the border, the group crammed into a van and got a ride to where they began walking. Some started drinking the Pepsi they had brought, which was already warm from the desert heat.
Chapter 8: “Bad Step at Bluebird”

- Chapter 8 described the first part of their walking journey up to Bluebird Pass. They saw lights which they suspected was the Border Patrol, so they ran and hid to avoid getting caught. However, in their haste some of them dropped water jugs and hats, which would have been very helpful on the desert journey.
Chapter 9: “Killed by the Light”

- The chapter began by Mendez trying to convince the group that they were not lost. Mendez had made 3 critical mistakes: the group had had too much sun exposure the day before, he started walking too early in the day, and he took a wrong turn at Bluebird. The chapter included a thorough description of the six stages of hyperthermia as they related to the Wellton 26.
Part 3: In Desolation
Chapter 10: “The Long Walk”

Chapter 10 described the poor conditions of walking through the desert. The group started walking at 6 a.m. and attempted to cross over the Growler Mountains many times. Then, the group decided to rest until night-time. However, by this point the guides were disoriented and began walking in the opposite direction from the desired destination. The group arrived at a different mountain range (the Granite Mountains) but were out of water by then.
Chapter 11: “Their Names”

- Chapter 11 included the personalized stories of the walkers in the group. This gave the reader an insight to their individual lives, goals, and reasons for crossing the border.
Chapter 12: “Broken Promise”

- In chapter 12, the guides collected money from the group to “set out for water and help.” However, the group realized they had probably simply abandoned them and were not returning. Thus, the group decided to continue on, desperate and out of water.
Chapter 13: “The Trees and the Sun”

- The chapter described in detail the desperation of the group. Two men in the group died. Five men in the group climbed a hill and tried to flag down a Border Patrol truck, but were unsuccessful.
Chapter 14: “Helicopters”

- Chapter 14 talked about what the men did at the end of their journey/lives. It also described what the men and/or bodies looked like when they were finally discovered.
Part 4: Aftermath
Chapter 15: “Aftermath”

- Chapter 15 described what happened to the men in the hospital and the cost to the U.S. hospitals/government/etc. due to this catastrophe.
Chapter 16: “Home”

The final chapter in the book discussed the fate of Mendez. Additionally, it talked about which country would be responsible for the medical and funeral expenses associated with those in the Wellton 26. Finally, the chapter addressed what Border Patrol sector would be able to claim the capture of the group. The chapter, and book, concluded with a sad description of a desensitized secretary giving the death report to a lady trying to locate one of the deceased in the group.
Additional Reading

- At the end of the book, the author included a lengthy “Acknowledgments” section thanking everyone who contributed to the writing of the book. Additionally, there is a “Reading Group Guide” which includes a Q & A section with Urrea, questions and topics for discussion, and Urrea’s suggestions for further reading.