

good shake of the train and he would tumble off. Other migrants have taught him tricks on how to stay awake.

Slap your own face, they say, do squats, pour drops of alcohol into your eyes, sing—do anything to keep yourself from getting tired. At four a.m. the train sounds like a chorus.

Mara Salvatrucha street gangsters always prowl the train tops in Chiapas, in groups of ten or twenty, looking for sleepers. Many gangsters settle in Chiapas after committing crimes in the United States and being deported to their home countries in Central America. Gangsters say the police target and kill them in Central America, so they've settled in Mexico and made a good business robbing migrants on top of the trains. Before a train leaves, they try to figure out which migrants are the best targets, which ones have money or food, and which ones are weakest. They try to get friendly with the migrants, telling them they have already done the train ride. Maybe they can offer tips? Enrique knows to watch for anyone with tattoos, especially gangsters who have skulls inked around their ankles—one skull, some say, for every person they have killed. Some wear black knit hats they can pull down over their faces.

Their brutality is legendary. Often they are high on marijuana or crack cocaine. Drugs embolden them. They are armed with machetes, knives, bats, and pistols. When the train gains speed, they surround a group of migrants. They tell them: Hand over your money or die. A train engineer, Emilio Canteros Méndez, often sees the armed gangs through his rear-view mirror. Fights erupt on top of the boxcars. Migrants who anger the gangsters because they don't have money or resist are