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## A Girl and Her Knife: A Feature-Length Screenplay

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A GIRL AND HER KNIFE: A FEATURE-  
LENGTH SCREENPLAY

A Thesis

by

Alyssa Sandoval

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Major Subject: Creative Writing

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

July 2023



A GIRL AND HER KNIFE: A FEATURE-  
LENGTH SCREENPLAY

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by  
Alyssa Sandoval

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July 2023



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## ABSTRACT

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*A Girl and Her Knife* is a dramatic screenplay written to promote inclusivity and empowerment of U.S. Chicanas in mainstream Hollywood. Once her grandmother dies, the protagonist, Luisa Fregoso, learns about her family's history through her grandmother's journal entries. Luisa's grandmother, Ana, ensured Luisa became successful as an independent woman who understood she didn't need love from a man. Luisa learned self-autonomy and self-liberation at a young age, but always struggled with love. Ultimately, her deceased grandmother continues to guide Luisa, but in a dangerous and dark way.

The screenplay defies Hollywood's traditional gender and cultural standards through distinct characters. Additionally, *A Girl and Her Knife* supports the release of new U.S. Chicana narratives through film. Furthermore, the primary objective of *A Girl and Her Knife* is to increase films created by and for U.S. Chicanas for mainstream distribution.





## DEDICATION

For all Chicanas...

...especially my grandmother.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All my gratitude to anyone who has believed in me, even when I didn't believe in myself.

Thank you.



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## CHAPTER I

### CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

“Why a knife? Why not a sword or lighter? A knife can only be successfully executed by men. This is unreachable.” Yes, these suggestions were given by men, but it fortunately only strengthens the essence of *A Girl and Her Knife*. My feature screenplay revolves around a Mexican American woman uncovering her traumatic family secrets, along with redeeming her love life all with the guidance of her recently deceased grandmother.

#### **Significance**

It was important to subvert redundant tropes commonly seen in mainstream media, including white, male killers and the glorification of automatic weapons. Therefore, it was obvious to make the main protagonist, Luisa Fregoso, a born-to-be killer and a successful publisher who has a secret passion for writing and killing men. Luisa is a multi-dimensional character who is dedicated to her career while balancing her romantic life. However, the old romantic genre tropes were not going to cut it for this narrative. Luisa doesn't have to be in love, nor does she want to. This romance is primarily categorized as the love interest, Benito, bending down to anything Luisa does. Of course, Luisa allows it because she longs for the attention.



But we dive first into her dwindling and overdue relationship with Omar her ex-boyfriend. Their relationship hints at an abusive past, yet their own individual problems allowed them to settle with each other, which will be further discussed in the section “The Detrimental Effects of Abuse.” Nonetheless, Omar is one of Luisa’s motives to kill, along with believing that is her only way to move on from him with the guidance of her grandmother.

I formed Luisa’s character to be carried with guidance. She needs a rock to keep her grounded from making impulsive decisions; a source to instill values in her. Her grandmother, Ana, ensured Luisa became successful as an independent woman who understood she didn’t need love from a man. Luisa learned self-autonomy and self-liberation at a young age, but always struggled with love. Once her grandmother dies, Luisa learns about her family’s history through her grandmother’s journal entries. Ultimately, her deceased grandmother continues to guide Luisa, but in a dangerous and dark way.

Additionally, Luisa’s cultural background is critical to the story yet should be noted is not her entire identity. Each of the characters in her family, including her grandmother, mother, and father, reflect their strong Mexican and Mexican American culture, which we notice in their dialogue and distinct characterizations. Incorporating my own culture through a contemporary and re-envisioned lens supports my ultimate purpose of subverting generic tropes historically seen in U.S. Latinx media, which I will thoroughly dissect in the section, “The Importance of Cultural Relevance in Mainstream Media.”

## **Genre**

The reliance of a successful thriller film is the element of surprise and unexpected turn of events. Psychological thriller films such as *Black Swan* (2010) was a source of inspiration for Luisa’s character because of the consistent anticipation throughout the course of the film. The film *Black Swan* (2010) has a compelling dynamic between the main protagonist, Nina, and her increasingly frustrating desire for perfection as a professional ballerina. However, we learn

throughout the film this disturbing desire is rooted from her own overbearing mother.

A mother-daughter relationship is just as important as a father-daughter relationship in film. Luisa and Carmina's relationship is instantly revealed in the beginning, reflecting a mother who would do anything for her daughter. This was a direct inspiration from my own cultural experiences as a Mexican American daughter. I have learned mothers in the Mexican American culture are sacrificial with the toughest skin in their household. Carmina is overbearing to Luisa because of her own past relationship with Luisa's father, in addition to being concerned with Luisa's safety because Luisa is living on her own. It is a rare living situation for Mexican American women to be financially secure and successful without a husband, therefore Luisa entirely defies these cultural expectations.

However, Luisa and Carmina do not share the same relationship as Luisa and Ana. Conflict arises due to Luisa following her grandmother's guidance as opposed to her own mother's, which we learn Luisa has done her entire life. Luisa admits Carmina does not mentally understand her own daughter. This is also significant throughout the screenplay because it demonstrates a mother deeply disconnected from her own daughter. It is a culturally relevant and distinct detail to include because it is often taboo within Mexican American families.

Furthermore, Luisa and Carmina's relationship builds Luisa's character throughout the screenplay, creating a unique dynamic between a Mexican American mother and daughter, uncommonly seen in the thriller genre, or any popular film genre. Mexican women have historically been narrowly portrayed or altogether absent from mainstream media; therefore, it was crucial to center the story around a Mexican American daughter coping with the traumas in her life and the character's lives around her.

For instance, a primary struggle for Luisa is how to love. Because she has never witnessed a healthy functioning relationship, Luisa attempts to navigate love her own way which leads her to act on impulsive and dangerous desires. Her relationship with Omar hints to an abusive and loveless past, which has been a recurring generational issue within her family. Her solution to ending this generational curse is to kill off Omar to prevent from making her grandmother and mother's past mistake of settling in a relationship. Luisa discovers her grandmother gifted her knife so she can learn to defend herself physically and emotionally from similar men. Therefore, Benito doesn't get killed off because he doesn't fall under the same category as an abusive male. Her grandmother didn't receive a happy ending, so Luisa redeems her family's history with men and ultimately breaks this generational curse.

Luisa is chosen yet cursed since she learns from the women who came before her but begins to embark on a murderous path. Luisa is also chosen by her grandmother because of their close relationship. Her grandmother predicted Luisa would encounter similar situations with men like her mother. In other words, the knife represents a generational tool, dedicated to protecting self-autonomy. It's a source of liberation to gain control of their lives without the coercion of men. Furthermore, Luisa works through her grandmother's, mother's, and her own love life with the protection of a knife and the wisdom of her grandmother.

## **Background**

As noted earlier, the portrayal of Mexican Americans in U.S. media is either negative or absent. This section will examine the histories of U.S. Latinx cultural images and understanding the cultural impact it has. Additionally, I will present the various ways I have subverted or damaged the cultural representation of Mexican Americans in *A Girl and Her Knife*.

During my undergraduate career at The University of Texas at Austin, learning film history intrigued my interest on the importance of cultural relevancy in mainstream mediums. I took a film history course with Dr. Charles Ramírez Berg and was deeply engaged with the weekly readings. A particular book titled “Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance” written by Ramírez Berg supported my understanding of the narrow depictions of U.S. Latinx folks in Hollywood.

Berg studies the narrative function that stereotypes play within classical Hollywood films and their contribution in popular film genres. But first, defining stereotype is crucial to the entirety of my thesis research. Berg argues: “Stereotypes flatten, homogenize, and generalize individuals within a group, emphasizing sameness and ignoring individual agency and variety.” (Berg, 17) Because the same stereotypes are repeated on-screen, they begin to be normalized. Once they are normalized to the viewer, then they are perpetuated off-screen.

Berg discusses in “Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance” the “vicious cycle” of stereotyping and the inevitable result of “narration becoming representation.” (Berg, 19) Stereotypes become the reality for minority groups, such as Mexican Americans, because “...ideologically stereotyping is hegemony, the subtle, naturalizing way the ruling class maintains its dominance over subordinate groups.” (Berg, 22) In other words, this is how the dominant group exerts control over the images being presented on-screen, creating no space for heterogeneity or a versatile image of the groups being othered.

## The Importance of Cultural Relevance in Mainstream Media

### The New Chicana

For instance, Berg mentions the three roles Mexican women have historically played: “Since in Hollywood films an ethnic woman can be only an overprotective matriarch, the ‘other woman,’ or a harlot, this practice automatically relegates Chicanas to stereotypical roles.” (Berg, 120) Therefore, Chicanas, or Mexican American women, have had diminishing on-screen roles, or are altogether absent from films. Berg continues: “Except for the protagonist’s mother, Chicanas do not exist, and certainly not as someone our Chicano hero would be romantically interested in.” (Berg, 137) Luisa is the main protagonist and heroine in *A Girl and Her Knife*, completely challenging the dominant male protagonist hero in Hollywood.

Another Chicana scholar, Jillian Báez, demonstrates the importance of the multiplicities of Latinidad and feminism in her scholarly article, “Towards a *Latinidad Feminista*: The Multiplicities of Latinidad and Feminism in Contemporary Cinema.” Báez digests contemporary Chicana films, such as *Real Women Have Curves* (2002) in her article to support her argument on the recent cinematic turn to counter binaries and offer more complex and transgressive portrayals of Latinas.

*Real Women Have Curves* (2002) follows the life of a Chicana teenager in Los Angeles, California, who lives with her stereotypical, overbearing mother and her forced cultural expectations as a Chicana. The main protagonist, Ana, is the “feminist” in her traditional Mexican household because she fights for her liberation and independence throughout the film – forbidden and rejected by her mother.

Again, the film highlights two opposing forces between a traditional mother and progressive daughter. For instance, “Ana’s mother constantly harasses about her weight, calling her ‘fat’ and reinforcing Anglo, colonial ideals of beauty and corporeal patriarchy.” (Báez, 119) The film focuses on multiple Chicana women with distinct ideological beliefs revolving around age, race, weight, and familial expectations, yet share the same cultural values. Báez highlights: “These women are embedded in systems of patriarchy and internal racism, believing that this is the only type of work for them as working class *Mexicanas*.” (Báez, 120)

The *Real Women Have Curves* (2002) director Patricia Cardoso centers the film on Ana’s character arc because of the “post-colonial feminism” of her generation. Báez notes: “These scenes have a postcolonial feminist streak in depicting how these female characters are exploited in the global economy by performing low-paying, gendered work. In response, Ana voices core liberal feminist tendencies saying that she has a right to her independence.” (Báez, 120) This is considered blasphemy in a Mexican American household because of the cultural expectations enforced onto Chicanas, which is sacrificing agency to become a mother and housewife.

Nonetheless, Luisa’s character in *A Girl and Her Knife* reflects a similar situation, following a Chicana in a postmodern feminist society where women reflect a life full of liberation and self-autonomy, detached from the tired cultural expectations from earlier Chicana generations.

Another postmodern feminist approach *A Girl and Her Knife* offers is the imperialism influences throughout the film. Like early liberal, White, middle-class feminism, Chicana feminism is represented in my screenplay. This marks a new kind of *Latinidad Feminista* as discussed in this chapter by Báez, which is “...one that demonstrates the social hierarchy and tensions between different generations within Latina/o communities.” (Báez, 120)

However, these two Chicana characters were not the first to subvert existing patriarchal standards in films. Mexican actress Lupe Vélez began her acting career in the early years of Hollywood's inception. Vélez reflected an independent and undomesticated character in the "Mexican Spitfire" Series in the 1920s, which embodied the prototype of the "Latina Spitfire" stereotype. (Fregoso, 51) The plots of the "Mexican Spitfire" series were simple-minded and exploitative all for comedic effect, in addition to exemplifying Vélez' foreign accent and the deliberate malapropisms. (Fregoso, 58)

In the series, Vélez demonstrated "...new sexual liberalism, the new erotic impulse that surged into the public realm during the 1920s, challenging the existing framework of strict gender roles and providing a new model for Mexican femininity." (Báez, 53) Chicana scholar, Rosa Linda Fregoso, stresses this model of a modern "new woman," in her article "Lupe Vélez: Queen of the B's." Fregoso writes: "...Lupe Vélez subverted the prevailing gendered framework and rejected dominant tropes associated with Mexican femininity, especially the ideal of motherhood and passivity made visible in the rebozo-draped Mexicana of Hollywood films." (Fregoso, 55)

However, Fregoso imperatively notes this "new woman" image was not the dominant image that circulated in public discourses. She argues: "This model of a modern 'new woman' is not the dominant image of Mexican femininity lodged in cultural memory; it is not the image of Mexican female identity that circulated in public discourses, either in Mexico, where the dominant feminine ideal was calcified in self-sacrificing motherhood, or in the United States, with its colonialist investment in an image of premodern Mexican primitivism." (Fregoso, 55)

Furthermore, Luisa's character demonstrates persistence as she's actively striving to be successful, such as in her publishing career. This defies the stereotypical representation of

Mexican American women on-screen, proven by Berg. “Posed in such totalizing terms, however, the number of ‘successes’ the American system allows in the movies is miniscule (one per protagonist per film), and these films reveal that both in and out of the movies achieving success is all but impossible for most people.” (Berg,124) Success in American culture could only be achieved by an Anglo person; other minority groups were excluded from obtaining a successful life or career. Therefore, Luisa’s character subverts this exclusionary logic perpetuated in U.S. society.

Ultimately, ethnocentrism is prevalent in mainstream media, which is defined as the “view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled or rated with reference to it.” (Berg, 14) *A Girl and Her Knife* reconfigures this notion, since the casting is entirely of Latinx background in contrast with the dominant Anglo casting historically seen in Hollywood films.

**Representation Matters.** Chicano scholar Chon Noriega in “Shot in America: Television, the State, and the Rise of Chicano Cinema” discusses the consequences of the negative portrayals of Chicanx communities in old Hollywood films. Noriega writes: “...activists objected to media portrayals of Mexicans as ‘stupid, shiftless, dirty, immoral, and lackey-bandito types.” (Noriega, 28) By the end of the twentieth century, protests within the Chicanx community abrupted and change was “...directed against the Academy Awards, industry guilds, and television stations.” (Noriega, 28) Nonetheless, the protest resulted in a negotiated equal-employment plan signed by seventy-two movie and television production companies, agreeing to diminish all Chicano stereotypes in their future films.

**A New Wave of Chicano Cinema.** The “destructive forces” in the Chicano community in the late twentieth century consisted of television, radio, and print media, which produced



negative setbacks and sustained the structure of rule. (Noriega, 31) Therefore, a social movement commenced in efforts to impact the political mainstream, such as the mainstream media industries. Additionally, Chicano film activists asserted change because they understood systemic change can only occur from inside the industry. Chicano/as would need to take charge of the narratives being told on-screen, but it begins behind the screen.

To develop and exemplify the “Chicano way of life” on-screen, Chicano/as needed to be part of the pre-production, production, and post-production processes within the film industry. During the social movement, the goal Chicano/as were working towards was simple: to create films by and for Chicanos. Although great success resulted from the Chicano movement, Chicana women were still being excluded from progressive practices, as they continued to be objectified or altogether overlooked by Chicano men who dominated the forefront of Chicano cinema.

**The Exclusion of Chicanas.** Chicana scholar, Rosa Linda Fregoso, explores the various forms of oppression Chicana filmmakers have endured in and out of Hollywood throughout her article “Chicana Film Practices: Confronting the ‘Many-Headed Demon of Oppression.’” Fregoso characterizes “...Chicana cinematic discourse as markedly counter aesthetic because Chicana filmmakers have had to counter two kinds of discourses: the dominant culture’s, which has distorted the Chicana subject; and the aesthetic discourse of Chicano males, which renders them nameless and voiceless.” (Fregoso, 171) In particular film, Chicanas have historically been “...functioning cosmetically as backdrops for male history. Thus, Chicana filmmakers have had to counter, challenge, and confront what Moraga and Anzaldúa call ‘the many-headed demon of oppression.’” (Fregoso, 171)

Upon entering Hollywood, filmmakers ultimately assimilate to the conventional

techniques and dominant values in a standard Hollywood film. However, to fight “the many-headed demon of oppression” noted earlier, *A Girl and Her Knife* will reflect a counter-aesthetic response to the misrepresentation and minimal representation of Chicanas on and off screen. Ultimately, *A Girl and Her Knife* will further the development of new film practices which “...subvert the univocal or bifocal character of previous formulations of cultural identity by infusing these with multiplicity and difference.” (Fregoso, 179)

Representation matters because dominant archetypes of Chicanas in Hollywood cannot co-exist with the hybrid and multiple representations of the Latina/o community. These representations reflect Latina subjectivity as opposed to a uni-dimensional and narrow depiction of Latinas in mainstream media. Once mainstream audiences, including Latina viewers, see and learn about our versatile representations, the postmodern *Latinidad Feminista* will be manifested and exemplified.

Báez concludes in “Towards a *Latinidad Feminista*: The Multiplicities of Latinidad and Feminism in Contemporary Cinema:” The racially and ethnically ambiguous characters are “...representative of a turn in the history of popular culture focusing on the Latina. Despite their problematic moments, these films begin to touch on multiple and intersecting identity politics, weaving both Latinidad and feminism together in both competing and complimenting ways, to create a new, hybrid *Latinidad Feminista*.” (Báez, 124)

**Chicanos in Popular Film Genres.** The number of Chicana-led films is miniscule, even more so in the thriller and/or horror film genres. Chicana writer, Roxana Sanchez, explores the horror genre tropes that pin Chicanos in an “unfavorable light,” within her article titled, “Horror: The New Frontier for Chicano Cinema.” Sanchez writes: “The horror genre for what it’s proven to be able to do historically in dissecting and exploring current social anxieties – as seen with the

1956 film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* in the height of the McCarthyism era – has become the one genre Chicanos’ voices are needed more than ever before.” (Sanchez, 2022)

In other words, the horror genre is a tool for Chicanos to voice their concerns since it proves to be the highest viewed genre by Chicanos as well. Sanchez reports, “horror fans are 23% more likely to be Hispanic than the average consumer.” (Sanchez, 2022) Therefore, the horror and thriller genres are highly marketable for the Latinx consumer, which is another reason Chicana stories matter enough to be told.

A recent horror film centered around the Chicana experience is *Madres* (2021). The film showcases a prevalent issue within the Chicana community. Sanchez argues, “The main threat, however, is much more sinister than is initially expected as racism, eugenics, forced sterilization, and poor working conditions are shown to be the true horrors at the heart of this terrifying and all too familiar tale.” (Sanchez, 2022)

**The Future of Chicana Cinema.** Therefore, *A Girl and Her Knife* pushes Chicana cinema forward, in hopes to produce a transgressive approach for Chicana women in Hollywood. The endless historical and cultural research over my undergraduate and graduate career has pushed me to further the movement with this screenplay: to create films by and for *Chicanas*. This is a small victory for Chicana cinema because it challenges the historic misrepresentation and absence of a cultural identity, along with creating a distinctly rich Chicana-centered narrative commonly unseen in Hollywood.

## **The Detrimental Effects of Abuse**

### **Why Do Women Kill?**

Based on a study conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, 11% of homicides committed in the U.S. are by women. In the news article, “Understanding Why Women Kill” by Colin Heffinger, the common denominator for women committing a homicide is a history of abuse. (Heffinger, 2015) Kathleen Brewer-Smyth, University of Delaware Professor, notes how abuse, specifically sexual or physical abuse, can damage the nervous system and may cause victims of abuse to overreact in response to dangerous situations. (Heffinger, 2015)

Luisa’s character evidently has mental issues – presumably manic and anxiety disorders - hinting to an abusive past. It was vital to involve a case of mental disturbance and the consequences of it in my screenplay because it is commonly overlooked within the Mexican American community. Luisa, like many Chicana women, have been victims of a sort of abuse done primarily by men, such as their spouses, partners, or fathers. However, Chicana women have learned to be submissive and ultimately silent for the sake of their family.

**Mental Illness in Mexican American Culture.** Therefore, mental health has been a stigma within my Mexican American culture, resulting in unfortunate homicides and suicides. According to a summary report on Intimate Partner Homicides, “The proportion of IPHs (Intimate Partner Homicides) relative to other homicides was 21 times higher among Latino women than among Latino men.” (Sabina, Swatt, 2015) Additionally, the report claims “When the victim was female the odds that a homicide would be an IPH increased by 27.0 times for White victims, 32.7 times for Black victims, and 70.5 times for Latino victims respectively.” (Sabina, Swatt, 2015)

**Mental Illness in *A Girl and Her Knife*.** Although Luisa is considered a statistic in the Intimate Partner Homicides, her character provides an alternative narrative to the mainstream, which is providing agency to a victim as opposed to living in a submissive state. Additionally, Luisa addresses her mental illnesses and finds solace in her grandmother who suffered similar disorders. We, as the viewer, find human relevancy and connection through Luisa's suffering, transcending her cultural identity. Luisa's character defies the voiceless and shameless Chicana trope, becoming her own heroine in her own story.

## CHAPTER II

### SCREENWRITER'S NOTE

*A Girl and Her Knife* was motivated by my desire to someday experience a film with a successful, and a non-traditional, alternative ending for a Chicana. It was written with the intention of highlighting the Chicana experience and our true realities Hollywood narratives have overshadowed. My screenplay was also written to voice my concerns about mental health issues in the Mexican American community – a subject that has been taboo in many households for far too long, including my own. Most importantly, prejudices and biases geared towards Chicana women will be reduced tremendously if accurate depictions were replaced with inaccurate ones.

Furthermore, Chicanas should be written about and included in all film genres because of the rich, cultural background and ambiguity we can provide. The popular film genres thriller and horror would undeniably excel and increase in profit if I saw more of my people on the movie screen.

#### **Chicano/as in Hollywood.**

The first step is to get our foot through the door in pre-production and production sites. Unfortunately, a recent study conducted by the University of Southern California reflects a plateau in Chicano cinema. For instance, “Only 4% of directors were Latinos out the 1,335 top jobs. Forty-eight of those directors were male and 1 was female.” (2019) To increase positive representation on-screen, Chicana/os must be behind the screen as I have previously argued.

The “Latinos in Film: Erasure On Screen & Behind the Camera Across 1,200 Popular Movies” film study shows: “When a Latino director was attached to a film, the percentage of Latino characters on screen increased from 4% to 13%. Similar increases were observed when a Latino producer worked on a movie – the percentage of Latino characters on screen climbed from 4% to 9%. Finally, when a Latino casting director was attached, the on-screen prevalence of Latino characters improved from 4% to 10%.” This study proves Chicano/a cinema is increasing but at a slow rate. Even then, are the images depicted in a positive or negative light?

Regardless of the steady increase in Latinx visibility, representation creates the narrative and vice versa. Chicano/as who use their platform to mobilize positive change are the true influencers. I have come to the conclusion the media is an ongoing cycle of perpetuating false images, particularly of minority groups. This only increases uncivilized rest for those minority groups, who live in a constant state of fear. Ultimately, the images people put on-screen will impact in either a positive or negative way. If screenwriters and directors would partake in positive social and cultural efforts, the gaps in the study above would undeniably close.

*A Girl and Her Knife* will impact how we learn about the diverse Chicana experience and stories that have yet to be seen. I hope I get to be part of such a monumental dream with *A Girl and Her Knife*.

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## APPENDIX

APPENDIX

A GIRL AND HER KNIFE:  
A FEATURE-LENGTH SCREENPLAY

A GIRL AND HER KNIFE.

Written by

Alyssa Sandoval

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

LUISA, 25 yr old, drops to her knees on her grandmother, ANA'S, fresh plot of dirt. Luisa holds a small switchblade knife in her right hand. Holds it to her heart. Then reaches in her back pocket and grabs a folded piece of paper. The paper reads: *My Luisa*.

Luisa's mother, CARMINA, walks towards Luisa. Carmina sees the letter in her hand, but not the knife. Luisa still on her knees, looks up to her mother standing beside her.

CARMINA

Your grandma said to read it  
whenever you feel far from her.

Luisa crumples the paper in her back pocket.

LUISA

Y eso?

Luisa opens her hand to reveal the knife. Carmina grabs the knife and punctures the fresh dirt covering Ana's decaying body six feet under. The knife stays standing up.

FADE TO BLACK.

INSERT TITLE.

EXT. ANA'S DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Luisa carries a box overflowing with miscellaneous items belonging to her deceased grandmother. She walks down the driveway to her car to place the boxes inside. Carmina is looking through the multiple boxes placed outside Ana's front door.

CARMINA

Qué es toda esta mugrero?

LUISA

I bet most of this is your crap  
before you moved out with dad.

CARMINA

I'm not a hoarder, Luisa.

Carmina pulls books from the full box. She has a confused look as she sees the different titles of the books.

CARMINA (CONT'D)

Why would she keep any of this?

Carmina opens one book. It's a thick spiritual book. A small paper falls on the ground. She doesn't care to pick it up.

LUISA

Mamá, bien cuidado! Dámelo!

Luisa comes from behind Carmina, and snatches the book from her arm. Luisa puts it back in the box. She notices the small paper on the ground and picks it up. She flips it to the other side then shoves it back in the book.

CARMINA

Ay, por favor.

Carmina puts her hand on her head as she watches OMAR, Luisa's toxic ex-boyfriend, walk up the driveway towards them.

OMAR

Why haven't you returned my calls,  
Luisa?

CARMINA

Her grandmother just died. Ese  
pendejo -

Luisa extends her arm to stop her mother from finishing her sentence. Luisa is clutching the book hard in her arm.

LUISA

Now is not a good time, Omar.

OMAR

You know what? Enough of this  
silent treatment bs. You're acting  
like a child. I'm done.

LUISA

The whole point of a breakup is to  
not be in communication with each  
other. You don't understand what  
commitment is, and you probably  
never will.

CARMINA

Ay que quieres, Omar? What don't  
you understand? Luisa doesn't want  
to be with you!

Carmina and Omar are on opposite ends of Luisa, standing in the middle of the driveway. Luisa clutches the book in her hand tighter. She finally picks it up with full force and raises it above Omar's head, ready to swing.

LUISA  
 GET THE FUCK OFF MY GRANDMA'S  
 DRIVEWAY. You're not welcome here  
 anymore, Omar.

Luisa and Omar stand face to face. She's slowly getting closer to him with the book still in a threatening position. Omar begins to retrieve, slowly walking backwards, but their eyes are still locked on each other.

One fresh tear runs down her face, panting. He vanishes from the sidewalk. She closes her eyes and looks up to the sky. Tries to hold herself together.

CARMINA  
 Demonios como él no pertenecen  
 aquí.

Carmina slowly gets the book from Luisa's hand and places it in the box on the ground. She picks up the box with both hands and walks past Luisa to continue packing the items in her vehicle.

Luisa stands in the driveway. Breathing slowly. She runs towards her grandmas' front door.

INT. ANA'S HOUSE - SAME DAY

Luisa runs inside the small, wooden home. The house is full with packed boxes stacked throughout the rooms. Luisa runs to her grandmother's bedroom.

INT. ANA'S BEDROOM - SAME DAY

Luisa tears through the only box in her grandmother's bedroom. She takes out written journals, antique glass bottles of perfume, and finally finds a small wooden jewelry box. Luisa opens the wooden box. It's filled with beaded necklaces and stud earrings. She digs to the bottom and finds her grandmother's knife. She stares at it.

CARMINA (O.S.)  
 Anything else in the bedroom? O es  
 todo, Luisa?

Luisa slams the jewelry box shut. She yells to the other room.

LUISA  
 Ya. No más una caja.

Luisa opens the box once more to peak at the knife.

LUISA (CONT'D)

I found you.

INT. LUISA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME DAY

Luisa lights a candle with a Eucalyptus label on it with a match. She continues to unpack her grandmother's boxes. Takes a whiff of the flame and takes a long inhale of the Eucalyptus scent. Her lips extend across her face, forming a wide smile. The house is empty, naturally lit.

LUISA

Maybe I should buy myself some flowers.

Her living room is filled with various vases of fresh flowers. An antique bookshelf made of natural oak. And an altar filled with candles alongside a picture of her grandmother resting next to her wooden jewelry box.

Luisa grabs the knife from the jewelry box and shoves it in her purse.

INT. FLOWER SHOP - DAY

A crowded flower shop filled with fresh flowers. Luisa takes a sniff of the shop as soon as she enters. YARA, flower shop owner and close friends with Luisa, looks over the counter to see Luisa walk in.

Luisa walks through every section of the store, gently touching every flower she sees. A few customers walk throughout the store.

YARA

Your mom called, Luisa.

LUISA

I'm just buying flowers for grandma. Tell her I don't need you, or her, to watch over me.

Yara looks up from the counter to stare at Luisa. She stares blankly, waiting for Luisa to respond with anything. Luisa finally meets Yara's eyes.

YARA

You got a crazy ex watching your every step. We're only worried what you will do if he comes near you again.

Luisa picks out a few colorful flowers. She walks over to the counter, and simultaneously sniffs them.

LUISA

Mira, grandma Ana is protecting me.  
I'm not going to get hurt again,  
Yara.

Luisa places the flowers on the counter. Yara puts the flowers in a clear, long vase. Then slides the vase to Luisa.

YARA

Tell grandma I say hi.

Luisa gives Yara a small smile.

EXT. FLOWER SHOP - SAME DAY

Luisa exits the flower shop smiling. She walks on the sidewalk, reaches for her water bottle from her purse. As she twists the cap off, a muscular man, BENITO, bumps into Luisa, spilling her water on her new bouquet.

BENITO

Ahh-m so sorry. That was totally my  
fault. I -

LUISA

I just bought these flowers.  
Really dude!

BENITO

(jokingly)  
Well at least you don't  
have to water them.

LUISA

(straight-faced)  
You're very lucky my hands are  
full. Otherwise, I'd be able to  
reach for my knife in my purse.

BENITO

Look, let me buy you another  
bouquet. I was just about to -

LUISA

I refuse to give my energy to  
another man today. Y'all are too  
much, I swear.

Luisa signals to the sidewalk in front of them.



Benito walks into the flower shop. Luisa is left standing in the middle of the sidewalk. She tries to remove the water from the flowers, wiping them. Looks up to the sky.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
 (sighs)  
 You're really testing my patience  
 today, huh?

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER THAT DAY

Luisa is placing the vase next to her grandmother's tombstone. She stands on the pile of dirt facing her tombstone. She lets out a small chuckle, and looks to the dirt.

LUISA  
 Your flowers are a little soaked.  
 Stupid, handsome pedestrian.

Luisa digs through her purse.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
 Anyways, Mom tried to hide your  
 knife from me. I know you want me  
 to hold tight to it, but -

Her phone rings from her purse. A text message from Omar reads: *Hey. I shouldn't have intruded like I did. You were right. Let's talk about it over dinner tonight?*

Luisa scoffs and puts her phone away.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
 Hm. Is this why you want me to have  
 the knife?

Luisa takes the knife out of her purse. She grips the handle and pokes the sharp point. The blade is clear enough to see her reflection. She admires it. Places the knife on the dirt.

Luisa sits on the dirt then opens one of her grandmother's writing journal.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
 May 3rd, 1978. I haven't written in  
 awhile. I don't know why if I love  
 writing. Antonio hasn't been home  
 in a week. I fear Carmina isn't  
 receiving the love she needs from  
 me.

(MORE)

LUISA (CONT'D)

Pero, gracias a dios mis padres la llevan a la iglesia después de la escuela mientras yo trabajo. Gracias mi dios.

She turns the page then continues reading.

LUISA (CONT'D)

May 23rd, 1978. What if Antonio leaves? Carmina will never forgive me. I can't let her live like the way I am. She'll never know the pain I endured for her. One day I'll teach her how to protect herself from men like him.

Luisa closes the journal and let's out a sigh.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Okay, I think that's enough of generational trauma.

INT. LUISA'S KITCHEN - SAME NIGHT

Luisa is holding a glass half-filled with red wine in her kitchen. Perfect amount of square footage for one person. Wooden details and sage green backsplashes cover the counters and walls.

INT. LUISA'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Connected to the kitchen, the dining room is mid-century modern style. One rectangular wooden dining table surrounded by matching chairs.

Luisa sits at the table with a full plate of food. Eyes closed; head bent over her plate. Hands folded together. She releases a sigh.

LUISA

I'm grateful for this food. I'm grateful for the situations You have pulled me from. Grant me patience with these dumbass men.

Luisa moans as she gulps her food. She gives a little dance in her chair. She looks out her window across the street as she hears distant yells from Benito and Omar. She spits some of her food out.

LUISA (CONT'D)

What the -

EXT. LUISA'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Luisa runs out to her driveway. Both Benito and Omar are holding a bouquet of flowers, standing a few feet apart facing Luisa.

LUISA

Why can't I just enjoy a peaceful dinner alone?!

OMAR

The dinner we were supposed to have?! Why didn't you text me back, Luisa?

BENITO

Because she wanted a peaceful dinner alone. Did you not hear what she just said?

Omar turns to face Benito and shoves him.

OMAR

And who the fuck is this?

Luisa turns to Omar then Benito.

LUISA

Why are you both here?? And how do YOU know where I live?

BENITO

I just came to drop these off because I ruined the other bouquet with your water bottle. Yara gave me your address, I hope you don't mind. I'm seriously not a stalker, I just wanted to apol -

OMAR

Are you two a thing? Is that why you didn't respond to my text?

LUISA

Why would you think I'd accept your flowers after the stunt you pulled at my DEAD grandmother's house?

OMAR

Man, I can't believe I wasted my money once again on you, stupid slut.

Luisa runs inside her house to get her knife. Points it to Omar.

LUISA  
(fuming)  
Call me a slut again! I fucking  
dare you!

Luisa points the knife up to Omar's face. She begins to walk closer to him. Benito is wide-eyed staring back and forth to each of them, his mouth wide open.

BENITO  
Hey man I think you should leave.  
Like seriously. I'd run if I were  
you.

Omar begins to give a little grin, eyes locked with Luisa's.

OMAR  
She won't do it.

LUISA  
I told you I didn't want to see you  
again. Or I *will* slit your throat,  
Omar. I'm not dealing with your  
bullshit anymore.

Luisa intensely stares at Omar, holding the knife to his throat. Omar looks at Luisa then at Benito. Omar begins to slowly walk off the driveway. Then runs frantically on the sidewalk. Benito begins to slowly step away from Luisa's driveway.

BENITO  
(scared)  
I should probably go too. It was a  
mistake coming -

Luisa casually points the blade at Benito and then points it to her front door.

LUISA  
No no. You. Stay. And bring the  
flowers inside.

Benito hesitates to move. He slowly follows Luisa into the house.

INT. LUISA'S HOUSE - SAME NIGHT

Luisa throws the knife onto her kitchen table. The dinner plate is still on the table full of food. Benito looks around her house.

BENITO  
(jokingly)  
This sure doesn't look like a  
serial killer's house.

LUISA  
(jokingly)  
It's getting there.

Benito puts the flowers on the table. Luisa puts her unfinished dinner in the kitchen sink. Chugs her glass of wine. Both are standing across each other with the kitchen island separating them.

BENITO  
So you date a lot then?

LUISA  
Never intentionally. I just give  
guys too many chances.

BENITO  
Well, some are worth the chance I  
think.

LUISA  
(stares blankly)  
So who are you and why did you  
bring me flowers after I clearly  
remember telling you I didn't want  
them?

BENITO  
I just had to apologize correctly.  
My name's Benito by the way.

LUISA  
And Yara gave you my address?

BENITO  
Yeah. I guess she saw me spill  
water on the flowers and insisted I  
drop off some fresh ones to you.

LUISA  
I appreciate the gesture, Benito.  
I'm just not in a very appreciative  
mood right now.

(MORE)

LUISA (CONT'D)

I swear I'm not a psycho bitch.

Benito admires the knife on the table.

BENITO

I'm not judging at all. Honestly, I think men can be psycho bitches. No need to explain yourself.

A few moments pass of awkward silence. Luisa runs her fingers through the blade resting on the table.

BENITO (CONT'D)

Well let me make you another dinner. It's the least I can do after ruining this one. I won't even say anything, I'll just sit quietly enjoying my amazing fish.

LUISA

You know how to cook fish?

BENITO

Nooo... But I can learn!

LUISA

(chuckles)

Alright, once you learn how to cook fish, I'll have dinner with you. And it's not a date. I just want to have company, and I'm really attracted to your energy for some reason.

BENITO

(smiling)

Oh, I'm attractive now?

LUISA

I didn't say I find you attractive. It's your energy, there's something calming about -

BENITO

Right. My energy.

LUISA

I'm gunna pick up that knife again Benito.

BENITO

Please do. I can take it.

They stare at each other. Two feet away. Luisa extends her arm to the doorknob. Eyes still locked on each other. She turns the knob and opens the front door.

LUISA  
(grinning)  
I know what you're doing. I'm not stupid.

BENITO  
I never said you were. So should I just show up again unannounced to cook for you, or?

Benito slowly lets out a smile. They hold a gaze for a few seconds. As Benito walks out the front door Luisa calls after him. Her voice growing louder.

LUISA  
Next Sunday night. And bring a bottle of wine. Moscato.

Luisa closes the door. She grabs the knife on the dining table. Admires it for a moment. Slides her clean fingers across both sides.

INT. LUISA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Luisa opens her grandmother's jewelry box and places the knife inside. She picks up a folded paper and begins to read it. It reads: *Luisa, don't live in fear. You are capable of amazing things many people struggle reaching for. I'm always with you even when you feel alone. Listen to your angels. They're for you, not against you. Remember, you are divinely protected and guided.*

She continues reading it. Then she closes her eyes and releases a short sigh.

LUISA  
I am divinely protected and guided.

Luisa sets the letter in the drawer then closes it.

INT. LUISA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Luisa frantically searches her closet and dirty pile of clothes for a shirt.

LUISA  
I'm gunna be so late. UHHHH.

After a few moments of pacing through her bedroom looking for a shirt she runs to the laundry room.

INT. LUISA'S LAUNDRY ROOM - SAME MORNING

Luisa picks up a shirt and looks at it, noticing a coffee stain right in the middle of the shirt. She puts it on.

INT. LUISA'S CAR - SAME MORNING

Luisa receives a phone call from a co-worker and close girl-friend, SASHA.

LUISA

I know I know.. I'm ten minutes away Sasha.

SASHA (O.S.)

I know you're on your way, you're the most punctual person in the office. But... umm there's a bouquet of flowers here for you and they're not from Omar.

LUISA

Really? Who are they from then?

SASHA (O.S.)

It doesn't say a name. But the card hints it was someone at your house recently. OMG you didn't tell me you're dating someone new already, Luisa?

LUISA

What?? No! Sasha, I seriously have no idea who they could be -

SASHA

SURE! You're spilling the tea once you get here ma'am.

Luisa ends the call. She grins a little. Parks the car in the office parking lot.

INT. OFFICE LOBBY - LATER THAT SAME MORNING

Luisa walks inside a small yet modern office building. ALEX, the receptionist and also close girl-friend to Luisa, greets her as she walks through the front door.



ALEX

Well, good morning Luisa.

LUISA

Morning, Alex. How's Luna doing?  
Any fur babies yet?

ALEX

(monotone voice)

Same answer as yesterday Luisa.

LUISA

I'm only asking cause I want one  
Alex!

ALEX

And I will let you know when it's  
time Luisa! Oh also where did those  
flowers come from?

LUISA

(sigh)

Ahh tu y Sasha son iguales!  
No sé Alejandro.

ALEX

Mhmmm. You're spilling it later  
ma'am!

INT. LUISA'S OFFICE - SAME MORNING

Luisa enters the doorway of her small yet cozy office space where the flowers are set on her desk. A small note with Benito's phone number attached to the vase. The note reads: *I hope this isn't too much. But I figured you can add this bouquet to the others in your living room. I'll be perfecting my cooking skills this week. Have a good day.*

Luisa can't help but force a smile and an eye roll.

LUISA

Damn, he's good.

Luisa releases a deep sigh and shakes her head. She moves the bouquet to the other side of her office, out of sight. Begins to work on her desktop.

LUISA (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Time to focus. No distractions  
Luisa.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MIDDAY

Luisa, Sasha, and Alex sit around a table in a coffee shop. Each drinking coffee and eating croissant sandwiches.

They each have wondering eyes for each other while they sit in awkward silence.

LUISA

Ugh. You both know I hate awkward silences.

SASHA AND ALEX

(in unison)

THEN SPILL IT.

LUISA

(eyeroll)

This dude showed up at my house last night. That's all I'm saying.

ALEX

Bullshit! Tell us more!

Luisa sips her coffee. Places the mug on the table and takes a huge bite of her wrap. Her mouth full.

LUISA

Why do we keep ordering coffee with our sandwiches? This is a horrible combination.

SASHA

They get the job done.

Luisa takes a huge swallow.

LUISA

But just cause they're both good doesn't mean they go together. You know? They're better off alone.

ALEX

You're really going in to a deep conversation about coffee and sandwiches?

LUISA

So this dude showed up WHILE Omar was also there. It was uhh weird. And the same guy spilled my water on me when I was leaving the flower shop earlier that day.

(MORE)

LUISA (CONT'D)

Yara gave him my address so he showed up at my house with a bouquet of flowers!

SASHA

He spilled water on you?

LUISA

Yeah, but not intentionally. He just bumped into me while I was drinking my water. My flowers were soaked.

ALEX

Oohh like a meet cute!

LUISA

Mmm.. more like a "I'll ruin your life if I give him a chance" meet cute.

ALEX

(sarcastically)

Right.

LUISA

I feel like he thinks I'm a psycho cause I busted grandma's switchblade out to shoo off Omar.

SASHA

Your grandma's what?

LUISA

She left me her knife after she passed. I didn't quite understand why, but after spending time with her yesterday. I think it's to protect myself from jerks like Omar.

ALEX

Wait, did Omar hurt you? I still don't understand why you haven't filed a restraining order on him.

SASHA

That man does not understand boundaries after the way he showed up at your grandma Ana's house.

LUISA  
 (fuming)  
 I swear I just want to slit his -

Sasha and Alex look at each other simultaneously. All three of them notice Luisa is clenching her silverware. Luisa looks at them, then to the customers around their table. She quickly releases.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
 All I'm saying is he better hope my knife isn't on me if he comes near me again.

Luisa takes a long sip of her coffee.

ALEX  
 So this mystery dude.. you never told us his name.

LUISA  
 Cause he's not important enough to tell you his name yet, Alex.

INT. LUISA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Luisa is sitting at her desk with a local author and client, FRIDA PALOS. Frida looks over her manuscript.

FRIDA PALOS  
 My only concern was the romanticization of the gun. I don't want it to contribute to gun violence.

LUISA  
 I don't believe it'll be romanticized, but in my opinion, it is an overused source of violence in fiction.

Frida takes off her reading glasses. Engages closely with Luisa.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
 Think about it. Even in films, guns tend to be overrated and just plain boring. If you want to spice up the villain's character, you have to be creative with their weapon, and ultimately their killings.

Luisa begins writing mark-ups on the manuscript.

FRIDA PALOS

Brilliant. Every time I come into  
your office your ideas always bring  
my writing to life.

Frida leans in to see the notes Luisa is writing.

FRIDA PALOS (CONT'D)

Have you ever thought of writing  
your own novel, Luisa?

Luisa stops writing, but avoids eye contact with Frida.  
Continues scanning the manuscript.

LUISA

Should I? I've never considered an  
entire novel. I mean I write  
everyday, but they're only thoughts  
in my head that will more than  
likely frighten people.

FRIDA PALOS

Well, you should know better than  
anyone. People love to be  
frightened.

Luisa gives Frida a fake smile. She checks the time on her  
clock.

LUISA

I apologize Frida. I have another  
client coming in ten minutes.  
Everything looks good. I'll have  
this published in time for your  
book reading this week.

Luisa quickly scans then closes the manuscript. She stands  
from behind her desk, Frida stands and gathers her  
belongings.

FRIDA PALOS

Luisa, I know there's a story  
inside of you waiting to be  
written.

Frida gives Luisa a wink. Luisa watches Frida as she exits  
Luisa's office.

EXT. LUISA'S HOUSE - MIDDAY

Luisa walks up her driveway carrying the vase of flowers from Benito. Unlocks the front door with her key and walks in.

INT. LUISA'S HOUSE - MIDDAY

Luisa sets the vase on the dining table. Immediately takes off the coffee-stained shirt.

                  LUISA  
                   Fuck this shirt.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

Luisa walks to the laundry room and throws it in the washer. She grabs her phone from her pocket and dials a number.

                  PIZZA MAN (OS)  
                   Hi, how can I help you?

                  LUISA  
                   Yes, one large supreme pizza for  
                   delivery please.

INT. LUISA'S RESTROOM - NIGHT

Luisa lays in her bath tub filled with water and bubbly soap. A wine glass is set on a tray next to her along with two small candles.

The doorbell rings.

INT. LUISA'S DOORWAY - NIGHT

Luisa opens the door.

                  PIZZA DELIVERER  
                   Large supreme for Luisa?

                  LUISA  
                   Yes!

The pizza deliverer stares Luisa up and down. Luisa is wearing nothing but a towel wrapped around her.

                  LUISA (CONT'D)  
                   It's Monday. Don't judge.

Luisa slams the door with the pizza box in one hand.

INT. LUISA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Luisa puts the pizza covered in mushrooms and meat in her mouth. She releases out a loud moan. Lo-fi music blaring in the background. She scrolls through her contact list on her phone. She holds the phone to hear in anticipation. She sighs.

CARMINA (O.S.)

Luisa, you're supposed to call me every other day! It's been two days! Why haven't you responded to any of my messages??

LUISA

(eyeroll)

First of all, I'm a grown woman. I don't need to call you everyday!

CARMINA (O.S.)

Yo se Luisa. Pero I need to know you're alive, I'm still your mother! Por que no entiendes?

Luisa releases a sigh in response and takes a huge bite of her pizza. She ignores her mother while she continues talking in Spanish off screen through the phone.

A pause.

LUISA

Alright mom, I need to make an important call. Te quiero mucho!  
Bye!

Luisa immediately hangs up the phone. Then begins to dial Benito's phone number from the note card attached to the flower vase. She puts the phone to her ear. A ringing begins.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Here goes nothing.

She takes another bite then takes a huge gulp from her wine glass.

The phone is still ringing. She begins to clear her throat anxiously. Takes another sip from the wine glass. Phone ringing. Checks to see if she called the right person.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Is he really not gonna answer my call?

Ringling stops for a moment. Luisa stares in excitement.

The voicemail option begins. Luisa lets out a groan. Then throws her phone on the couch.

LUISA (CONT'D)

The only person I wanted to talk to tonight..

Luisa lays on the couch hopelessly. Stares into the ceiling and dramatically sighs.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Oh well, time to get ready for the peda.

Luisa receives a text message from Alex and Sasha (group message). The message from Alex reads: *Be ready in an hour girlsss*. A message soon after from Sasha reads: *No sad hoes tonight \*cough cough\* Luisa*.

Luisa begins to start typing but stops and chugs the remaining wine from the bottle.

INT. LUISA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Luisa runs to her room and quickly changes into a sleek, fitted dress. She checks her phone for any missed calls.

Luisa sets her makeup with setting spray. Looks in her mirror and lets out a small smirk. Quickly admires herself.

LUISA

Maybe I'll meet the love of my life tonight..

A car horn is blaring from outside. Luisa grabs her knife from the jewelry box, shoves it in her purse, then runs out the door.

INT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT

Slides into the backseat of Alex's car, Sasha is fixing her lipstick in the passenger seat.

SASHA

I can't see what you're wearing, but the energy in the car immediately got 10x sexier.

LUISA

Crap, I forgot my glasses.



ALEX

Trust me, you won't need them.

LUISA

BUT, I didn't forget grandma's knife!

Luisa opens her purse and extends the knife to show Alex and Sasha. Alex and Sasha both turn to see the knife shining with the car's headlights passing them.

SASHA

Luisa, what the hell! You can't take that to the freaking club.

Alex lets out a laugh. Loses control of the wheel a little.

LUISA

You never know when you'll need it, Sasha.

SASHA

GIVE ME THE DAMN KNIFE, LUISA.

Luisa doesn't fight Sasha's demand. Gives her an eyeroll and gives Sasha the knife.

LUISA

Oh, here, take my phone too. I can't afford to drunk call or text Benito. I already tried calling him tonight and you know how I get when I -

SASHA

(excited)  
You called him!?

LUISA

The asshole didn't answer. What could he possibly have going on on a Monday night? Oh no, what if he has kids and he's taking care of them or..

SASHA

SHHHHH chill! Why are you overthinking about it so much? He probably just missed your call. I'm sure he'll call you back.

ALEX

Have you been drinking wine?

LUISA  
Half a bottle.

ALEX  
Ooh honey, hand over your phone.

Luisa gives Alex her phone. Then lets out a sigh.

SASHA  
Do you like him or what Luisa?  
Like actually like him?

LUISA  
I don't even know yet. I mean I  
must have some sort of interest if  
I called him, right? Or maybe I was  
just horny.. I was drinking wine  
AND eating pizza. You know how I  
moan when I eat pizza.

Alex and Sasha look at each other in unison and give a  
knowingly look to each other.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
He was honestly the only person I  
wanted to talk to tonight. I don't  
know why I'm so attracted to his  
energy. I don't even know him! He  
could be a killer! You know how I'm  
weirdly attracted to killers!

ALEX  
Don't stress over this. If it's  
meant to be, then it'll happen.  
Divine timing is EVERYTHING. Your  
grandma said so.

THE THREE OF THEM IN UNISON:  
Rest in peace grandma Ana.

LUISA  
I just wish I knew what to do.

Luisa closes her eyes gently in the backseat of the moving  
car.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Tell me what to do.

Alex turns up the stereo volume. Luisa opens her eyes and  
rolls down the back window. Her arm extends out the window  
into the darkness. She closes her eyes again.

Alex speeds up the car. Sasha rolls down her window and yells out the window.

SASHA

Woohoo!

A bright neon sign lights the street. It reads *Mala Vida*.

INT. MALA VIDA CLUB - SAME NIGHT

Neon lights fill the dark space. People surround the compact bar table. Alex is carrying three glass drinks.

Luisa walks out of the ladies room and sees Alex. Luisa is seeing blurry.

ALEX

You good?

LUISA

Yeah. I'm totally fine. Shots?!

ALEX

Where's Sasha?

Luisa turns around to see Sasha walking out the men's room.

LUISA

This chick.

Alex and Luisa laugh at Sasha. They watch her stumble over a couple making out.

ALEX

SASHA!

They each sip their drinks and stand near the bar. Luisa looks around the filled space. People are dancing and grinding on each other. Luisa makes eye contact with a tall, man wearing a snapback cap. Their eyes are locked on each other. Luisa starts dancing by herself. The man walks over.

SASHA

Ooh, honey.

LUISA

All mine, Sasha.

Alex and Sasha walk back to the bar. Luisa dances alone. The man grabs her waist. Luisa looks at his hand and smacks it.

SNAPBACK MAN

I'm sorry. You're gorgeous. Can I dance with you?

LUISA

What's your name?

SNAPBACK MAN

Sam. Yours?

LUISA

Kristine.

SAM

Nice to meet you.

Sam smiles at Luisa and shakes her hand. They shout to each other over the loud music.

SAM (CONT'D)

So can I dance with you?

LUISA

I'm sorry I have a boyfriend.

SAM

Is he here?

LUISA

No. He's working.

SAM

Well, he doesn't have to know.

LUISA

I said no, Sam. My friend Sasha over there would love to dance with you. She's happily single.

SAM

Do you have social media?

LUISA

Nope.

Luisa continues to dance by herself. Sam gives an amused face. He grabs her waist again.

SAM

Let me buy you a drink at least.

Luisa clenches his wrist.

LUISA

Fine. Let's go to my car.

Sam follows her out the club. Alex and Sasha give Luisa a shocked look. Luisa gives Sasha her drink as she passes them.

EXT. MALA VIDA CLUB - SAME NIGHT

Sam and Luisa walk over to Alex's car. A few people are walking inside the club.

SAM

Do you always come on Thursdays?

LUISA

Of course not.

Luisa opens the passenger door to the car. She reaches on the side of the door for her knife.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Wait on the sidewalk.

Sam obeys.

LUISA (CONT'D)

So are you from here? I've never seen you here before.

Luisa holds the knife in her hand.

SAM

I'm from Chicago. I'm visiting a friend for his birthday.

LUISA

That's sweet of you.

Luisa slams the door. Sam takes a step back as he notices the knife in her hand.

SAM

Why do you have a knife, Kristine?

LUISA

Look, Sam. I have to tell you the truth. I don't have a boyfriend and my name isn't Kristine.

SAM

Who the fuck are you?

LUISA  
That's not really important.

Luisa walks closer to Sam with the knife pointing to him.

SAM  
What do you want from me? I just wanted to fuck you.

LUISA  
After I said I didn't want to dance with you? And after I told you I have a boyfriend?

SAM  
But you don't.

Luisa presses the knife into his stomach. She's inches away from his face.

LUISA  
When a girl tells you no, it means no. I tell guys I have a boyfriend so they can get off my ass. I don't want to be touched by you, Sam. Now, leave me alone or your body is going to be found in that dumpster over there.

Sam looks for his car keys in his pocket. He walks away frantically and gets into his car. He drives away.

Luisa rubs her fingers against the knife. She watches him drive off.

BENITO  
Luisa!

Luisa turns to see Benito walking down the sidewalk. He notices the knife in her hand.

BENITO (CONT'D)  
Don't tell me your ex is here.

LUISA  
No! I was just putting it back in the car. I thought I was going to get mugged. False alarm.

Benito looks at her. Their eyes lock. Luisa opens the passenger door, and throws the knife in.

BENITO  
Do you want to get a drink with me?

LUISA  
Let's do it.

INT. MALA VIDA CLUB - SAME NIGHT

Luisa sees Alex and Sasha dancing in the middle of the space. The strobe lights flash different colors. Luisa holds Benito's hand. They walk into the crowd. Benito puts his hand on Luisa's waist.

                  BENITO  
Is this okay?

Luisa smiles at him. Their bodies are pressed against each other as they dance together. Luisa closes her eyes and squeezes Benito's arm.

FADE TO:

INT. LUISA'S OFFICE - NEXT MORNING

(Continuous shot)

Luisa sits at her desk with her eyes closed, head tilting forward. Her phone rings and wakes up startled. Receives a text from Benito and squints to read: *Had a great time last night. Still perfecting my salmon cooking skills. Lol*

Hungover Luisa gives a long gasp. Then places her hand on her head.

                  LUISA  
Ah my head.

She immediately texts Sasha: *Come to my office, ASAP.* Sasha walks into Luisa's office. Luisa's head is face down on her desk with her phone in her hand. The door closes.

                  SASHA  
Recovering?

Luisa shows Sasha the text message from Benito. Luisa picks up her head too fast.

                  LUISA  
Ah fuck. Fuck. Ahh.

Sasha reads the message. Then gasps. Luisa looks to Sasha.

                  LUISA (CONT'D)  
WHAT DID I DO LAST NIGHT?!

Luisa takes a sip of her coffee. Gives a bitter face.

SASHA

Okay. Let me refresh my memory.  
Got to the club. Took rounds of  
shots. You were with Alex and  
I the whole time.

Sasha and Luisa look at each other.

SASHA (CONT'D)

(unsure)

Right?

LUISA

Sasha, if you don't remember then I  
don't remember!

SASHA

Let me ask Alex.

Sasha begins texting a message to Alex.

LUISA

I really REALLY hope we  
didn't sleep together. Only cause  
I don't remember anything. Ahh what  
if it wasn't consensual?!

SASHA

Calm down. You're overthinking  
again. I'm sure Alex knows,  
his memory is as clear as my face.

Alex walks through Luisa's office door.

ALEX

Alright, what is all the commotion?  
Luisa, I thought you'd be happier  
after your night with Benito.

LUISA

What the fuck did I do last night  
Alex?

ALEX

You seriously don't remember!?  
Benito showed up to the club. You  
were both dancing and talking for  
the longest time, but you were  
beyond intoxicated.



LUISA

So we just talked? I didn't go home with him right?

ALEX

Ma'am, do you really think I'd let your drunk ass go home with a stranger. That's the golden friend rule.

LUISA

(sighs)

By any chance do you know what we talked about?

ALEX

Mmm. It was hard to tell. But I can tell you I've never seen you laugh so much with anyone before. So either he was really funny or you were just being nice cause you liked him..

SASHA

Knowing you it was probably the latter.

LUISA

True.

ALEX

Well, if that's all you needed from me. I should get back to my desk before I get bitched at again.

LUISA

Ugh Alex, what would I do without you?

ALEX

You might be an independent woman, but I know how to take care of you Luisa.

Alex winks at Luisa with a grin, then walks out the office door.

Luisa and Sasha remain sitting on the chairs and sip their coffee. Sasha turns to Luisa.

SASHA

Who needs a knife when you have two friends who know how to protect you?

LUISA  
You hid my knife, didn't you?

Sasha grabs her coffee then quietly walks out of Luisa's office, leaving Luisa alone at her desk. She sees a note on her desk that reads: *Book reading @ 11:30. (Frida Palos)*

LUISA (CONT'D)  
Crap.

Luisa grabs her purse and chugs her coffee. She exits her office.

INT. BOOKSTORE - SAME DAY

A small bookstore with ten empty chairs are lined up in two rows. Frida is sitting at a table with her copy of the book. She looks deeply invested on a page.

Luisa walks towards Frida, panting. Luisa scans the store.

LUISA  
Don't worry give it a few minutes.

Frida quickly looks up to see Luisa walking towards her. They both exchange smiles and slightly hug.

FRIDA PALOS  
Should I have invited my parents? I know this is my first book and everything, but the content is a little -

LUISA  
To be fair, I wouldn't have invited my mother either.

An older couple walk in the bookstore and take their seats.

FRIDA PALOS  
Don't you think it's interesting how writers isolate their work from their family?

LUISA  
Mmm. I'm not a writer..

FRIDA PALOS  
Not yet, Luisa.

Frida stands from her chair then greets the couple. Luisa is left standing alone, pondering.

Benito walks in the bookstore. Frida notices him walking to a chair, then greets him with a handshake.

FRIDA PALOS (CONT'D)  
Thank you for coming. I'm Frida  
Palos.

Benito accepts her handshake, but his eyes are set on Luisa standing at a distance from him.

BENITO  
Nice to meet you. Benito.

Luisa hears the exchange, then slowly turns to see Benito looking at her. Luisa gives a fake smile and weak wave to Benito. Frida notices Luisa's sudden awkwardness and walks back to the couple sitting down.

Benito walks up to Luisa.

LUISA  
You're not following me, right?

BENITO  
Of course I am.

Luisa smirks a little.

LUISA  
First the flower shop. My house.  
Now the bookstore.

BENITO  
You know this town isn't that big..

LUISA  
What's next? My grandmother's  
grave?

BENITO  
Woah. Okay, I'm crazy but not THAT  
crazy.

LUISA  
HA. So you admit you're crazy!

BENITO  
I never said I wasn't.

They both release a chuckle. More people begin to crowd the bookstore. Benito and Luisa take a seat in the front row.

LUISA

Hm. I think that's why I'm weirdly attracted to you. I mean *your energy*.

BENITO

Right. *My energy*. I don't know why you have to make this so complicated. Just admit you're attracted to me, then we can move on from this awful, *stalking* stage. ...I mean talking stage people endure.

Luisa looks at him, then quickly turns to see Frida returning to the front of the bookstore. All the seats are full.

FRIDA PALOS

Thank you everyone for coming out. I'd like to thank the bookstore for hosting my book reading today, along with my favorite fiction publisher, Luisa Fregoso with A&K publishing.

Frida turns to Luisa, along with the rest of the crowd. Luisa smiles then gives a short wave to the people. Benito joins the crowd in applause.

FRIDA PALOS (CONT'D)

Luisa helped navigate my darkest thoughts and put them onto paper. So I hope this book is full of hope for someone.

Frida clears her throat.

FRIDA PALOS (CONT'D)

I'll read the first chapter. Then open the floor to any questions.

Luisa turns to Benito. He's fixated on what Frida is reading.

FRIDA PALOS (CONT'D)

Love came bursting from the ruins beneath her feet. Overflowing like fiery lava. This love was only meant to be admired, never embraced nor felt by the leading servant in Odin, Lady Ruth. For every time she touched it for too long, it burned what remains of her heart.

Luisa wipes a small tear from her face. She quickly gets up and exits the bookstore.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - SAME DAY

Luisa is storming on the empty sidewalk. Benito steps out the door, looking in both directions of the sidewalk.

EXT. FLOWER SHOP - SAME DAY

BENITO

Luisa!

Luisa keeps walking, tears streaming down her cheeks. Benito runs to her and stands in front of her.

INT. FLOWER SHOP - SAME DAY

Yara is helping a customer at the counter. She sees Benito and Luisa outside the window, standing on the sidewalk.

EXT. FLOWER SHOP - SAME DAY

LUISA

I don't know what to do with *love*.  
Every time an opportunity comes, I  
fuck it up. There's a reason my  
grandmother left me with her knife.  
Benito, I'm not safe to be with.  
Vete, por favor.

Benito doesn't fight it. He obeys and watches Luisa walk off the sidewalk. A customer walks out of the flower shop. Benito peaks into the flower shop as the door slowly closes. Yara is looking at him from the counter.

INT. FLOWER SHOP - SAME DAY

Yara tidies up the empty flower shop. Benito picks out a few flowers. They both roam through the same aisle.

YARA

I'm pretty sure Luisa didn't tell  
you, but this is Luisa's  
grandmother's flower shop. She  
needed an escape from home, so she  
created this beauty.

BENITO

I know I've just met Luisa, but I can't help to wonder why she is the way she is.

YARA

Luisa is a challenge. Always has and always will be. Her grandmother always pushed her to accept challenges. And for Luisa, love has always been a challenge. That's the only challenge she can never overcome.

BENITO

So she just gave up? What about Omar?

YARA

Omar was just a temporary, new toy for Luisa. She knew he couldn't resist her, so she kept playing with it. But new toys get boring and she didn't want to play with him anymore.

BENITO

And he couldn't accept that.

YARA

Yup. Luisa knows she can be toxic and crazy, so her grandmother always kept her in line.

A customer walks in. Only Yara acknowledges.

BENITO

But, why entertain if you know you're not satisfied with it?

YARA

Cause that's what love has ever been to her.

Benito picks a few flowers with long stems. He hands them to Yara.

YARA (CONT'D)

I'd go over grandma Ana's house after school with Luisa. The only times we had ever seen grandma Ana happy were when Luisa's grandfather, Antonio, wasn't home.

BENITO

So grandma Ana stayed away. And Luisa learned to stay away from all men. Hence grandma Ana leaving her her knife.

YARA

It's a little harsh, but that is her way of protecting Luisa. She doesn't want her to repeat her same mistakes.

Benito and Yara are at the counter across from each other. Yara pretties up the bouquet of flowers. Cuts the excess stem off. She hands them to Benito.

YARA (CONT'D)

You're brave for trying to pursue Luisa. Don't give up. I'm rooting for you.

EXT. CEMETERY - SAME DAY

Luisa is at her grandmother Ana's grave. Standing in front with her phone out. She sends a message to Sasha that reads: *Won't be coming back to the office. I'm fine, something came up. Cover for me.*

Luisa puts her phone in her purse. She takes out her grandmother's knife.

LUISA

Out of everything you left me, why did it have to be the most dangerous thing?

Luisa looks down at the knife. A tear falls on the blade.

LUISA (CONT'D)

I can't do this without you.

Luisa falls to her knees. She stabs the dirt next to her grandmother's gravestone like her mother did the day she got buried. She wipes her face.

LUISA (CONT'D)

They won't do to me what they did to you, grandma. No hay derecho.

Luisa slowly picks herself up. Luisa grabs the knife from the ground. She stands with full confidence in front of her deceased grandmother.

LUISA (CONT'D)

I deserve to be loved the way I've always dreamt of. I won't let anything nor anyone get in the way of that.

As Luisa turns to leave, Benito is walking towards her with the bouquet of flowers. Luisa is startled by his presence. Benito's eyes open wide as he notices the knife in Luisa's hand.

BENITO

Woah. It's just me. These are from Yara, but mainly me since I...bought them. Luisa, please put the knife down.

LUISA

Seriously dude, how do you know where I am all the time?

BENITO

Oh I just came to see your grandma. You know like all your crazy ex-boyfriends do.

They both let out small grins.

LUISA

I'm sorry I ran out. That was immature.

BENITO

Here.

Benito gives Luisa the bouquet. She places them near grandma Ana's gravestone.

BENITO (CONT'D)

They're from your grandma's flower shop. Yara sort of told me your whole life story.

LUISA

And that didn't make you run off?

Benito steps closer to Luisa.

BENITO

I don't know if you've noticed. But I love a challenge, Luisa.

Luisa doesn't step back, but puts the knife in between them.



LUISA  
That's close enough.

BENITO  
How often do you come visit her?

LUISA  
Whenever guys like you come around and I never know what the fuck to do because I'm so scared of doing the wrong thing. Happens every time.

BENITO  
Give yourself some grace. You'll get it right eventually.

Luisa puts the knife down.

LUISA  
Look, relationships have always been complicated for me. I've never seen a functional, healthy relationship. I've never learned what love is, Benito.

BENITO  
You don't learn it. You just be it, but you have to let it flow through you.

LUISA  
This is fucked up, but I blame my dad mostly. He didn't know what love was either, so how should his daughter know?

BENITO  
Does it feel like he passed down his broken parts to you?

LUISA  
They're like shadows I can't get get away from. I know they're there, but I just want them to leave me alone.

BENITO  
Well, I hate to be the person to tell you, but it looks like you're healing for the rest of your life, Luisa.

They let out a smirk to each other.

LUISA

I have no idea what happened to my dad, and at this point I'm scared to find out. His name is like a curse in my family.

Luisa sheds a tear. Her voice cracks. She falls to her knees and drops the knife.

BENITO

We can't control where we came from. But, we have control over what we want our future to look like. As long as you learn from his mistakes -

LUISA

There is no way in hell I'm ending up like my father. From what I remember of him, he never knew how to love.

BENITO

So learn from what he didn't do. Don't let his generational curse overcome you, Luisa. Maybe it's you that has to break it.

LUISA

Have you been reading my grandma's journals? That sounds like something she would've written.

BENITO

I'll take that as a compliment!

Benito looks to the knife on the ground. He picks it up and holds it.

BENITO (CONT'D)

Do you really need this to protect you?

Luisa doesn't respond. She stares at it then at her grandmother's grave. Luisa swiftly takes the knife from Benito.

LUISA

Don't underestimate a girl with a knife.

FADE OUT.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER THAT DAY

A cozy, empty coffee shop is filled with ambient music. One person is in line. A barista is making their coffee order. The front door opens. Omar walks to the counter and waits in line. His phone begins to ring. Only Omar sees the caller ID. He begins speaking to the phone.

OMAR

I can't deal with this right now.  
I'm on my lunch -

OMAR (CONT'D)

I don't have to explain why to you,  
Mia. It's over.

The customer grabs his coffee and leaves.

BARISTA

How can I help you, sir?

OMAR

Yeah, give me a sec.

The barista goes to the back storage room to restock lids and cups. The front door opens but we don't see who it is. We hear footsteps walk behind Omar.

OMAR (CONT'D)

I don't want anything to do with  
you. Go bother someone else.

Before Omar hangs up the phone, a knife comes from behind him and punctures his back. Omar turns slowly to see Luisa. The phone falls from his hand.

OMAR (CONT'D)

Luisa.

She stabs his chest continuously. Blood splatters on both of them. He falls to his knees. Luisa stabs him until his eyes are closed. His body is dead on the ground. Luisa looks at it, panting.

LUISA

I won't let anything get in the way  
of love. This is what you deserve.

Luisa looks at the knife, then her hands. She grabs a few napkins to wipe down the blood spots on the counter, along with her hands and face. She quickly runs out the coffee shop, leaving Omar's body on the floor.

The barista returns from the back storage room. She is holding a tall pack of cups in one hand and a pack of lids in the other.

BARISTA

Okay. Sorry for the wait, sir.

She puts the packs down to see no one standing behind the counter.

INT. LUISA'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Luisa is taking deep breaths as she wipes the blood off the knife in her bathroom sink. She scrubs her hands thoroughly. She can't stand to look herself in the mirror.

Luisa sits in the bathwater in her bathtub, hugging herself. We see red in the water from the blood on her body. Tears stream down her face.

INT. LUISA'S BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

Luisa is wrapped in a robe. She checks her phone. We see multiple missed calls from her mother. She ignores an incoming call from Sasha. She throws the phone on her bed.

Luisa goes to her grandmother's jewelry box. She places the clean knife in the box. She takes out her grandmother's journal, opens it, and begins reading from the folded page Luisa bookmarked.

LUISA

You think you know what love is.  
But then you find someone who  
proves you wrong. Why did I accept  
this idea of love my whole life  
rather than experiencing it? No  
entiendo esas cosas.

Luisa closes the journal. Her phone is still buzzing from incoming calls.

LUISA (CONT'D)

I swear if I go to jail because of  
you, grandma.

INT. LUISA'S LIVING ROOM - SAME NIGHT

Luisa goes to her bookshelf and opens the self-help book she kept from her grandmother's house. She finds the small note hidden in one of the pages, she reads it.

LUISA

You will find love because you are love. Don't accept anything less than love from anyone. Don't make the same mistake as your mother and I. Remember my words when you meet him, Luisa.

Luisa folds it then puts it back in the book. She releases a sigh.

LUISA (CONT'D)

I am equipped for love. I can do this.

INT. LUISA'S BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

Luisa enters her room, places the book on her bed. She picks up her phone from where she threw it. She dials a number. We hear a ringing.

BENITO (O.S.)

Uh, Luisa?

LUISA

I know this is a random time. I was just wondering if you'd like to come over? There's salmon we can cook..

BENITO (O.S.)

I mean I would love to. Wait, have you heard what happened at the coffee shop today?

LUISA

Ohh. I heard, Sasha called awhile ago. Terrible terrible news. Out of all places! A coffee shop!

INT. LUISA'S KITCHEN - SAME NIGHT

Luisa walks over to the fridge and scans the inside. She takes out two frozen salmon fillets to thaw. She closes the fridge door.

LUISA

Where's the creativity in that?

BENITO (O.S.)

They said he was stabbed almost ten times.

LUISA

Wow. Ten! That's intense. Sounds like we got a Michael Myers on the loose..

Luisa laughs a little at her joke. She opens a kitchen drawer and takes out a knife. She looks at it.

BENITO (O.S.)

I know you're going through mixed emotions, especially since your history with Omar. Um, but yea I can go over in about an hour. I can pick up some groceries if we need some for dinner?

LUISA

Oh, just Moscato. I've got everything we need.

Luisa puts the knife back in the drawer.

LUISA (CONT'D)

I'll be here. See you in a bit.  
Bye.

Luisa begins prepping the dinner. She puts the salmon fillets in the sink. Turns on the faucet to let it thaw. She lets the hot water run.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Should probably call mom.

Luisa dries her hands then calls her mom.

CARMINA (O.S.)

Donde estas, Luisa? It's been an hour since I've called. Omar es -

LUISA

Ya, yo se. Perdon. I was on the phone with Sasha.

CARMINA (O.S.)

Are you okay, Luisa?

LUISA

No se, mamá. No se.

CARMINA (O.S.)

I can come stay with you, Luisa.

LUISA

No te preocupes. I'm fine. I'm going to have dinner with a..

CARMINA (O.S.)

A friend?

LUISA

Algo como eso.

CARMINA (O.S.)

Luisa! I better not find out you're dating another Omar.

LUISA

Trust me. He's nothing like Omar.

CARMINA (O.S.)

Ta bueno. Call me in the morning, Luisa. Por favor.

LUISA

Si. No te preocupes. Hasta mañana. Te amo.

CARMINA (O.S.)

Luisa, te amo. Good night.

Luisa hangs up the call. She looks at the main news headline on her phone. She plays the news clip.

NEWS ANCHOR

Omar Alonso, 26, stabbed fatally at a local coffee shop on South Bertha road.

Luisa starts seasoning the salmon on a cutting board. Takes out pans and places them on the stove. She boils pasta in a pot.

The barista appears on the news video.

BARISTA

I walk over the counter and see a pool of blood on the hardwood floor. The image is just replaying in my head.

NEWS ANCHOR

No suspects still. Nor any security footage to help authorities find the killer. Anyone with any information please call -

Luisa turns off her phone.

INT. LUISA'S BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

She finds a journal next to her bed. It's empty. She finds a pen and begins writing. She sits on the floor.

A sudden banging comes from the front door. Luisa finishes writing, closes her journal. She gets up slowly. The banging continues. She opens the jewelry box, reaches for the knife. Then cautiously walks out of her bedroom.

INT. LUISA'S FRONT DOOR - SAME NIGHT

Her knife is in one hand. She reaches for the front doorknob. Benito is about to bang again when the door opens.

LUISA  
Geez. You scared me.

BENITO  
Were you going to stab me, Luisa?

They both look at the knife. Benito is holding a bottle of wine in his hand. Benito walks inside her house. The door shuts behind them.

INT. LUISA'S KITCHEN - SAME NIGHT

Luisa puts the knife on the counter. She runs to the stove where smoke is arising from the pots. Benito opens the fridge and puts the bottle of wine inside.

LUISA  
Maybe. There's a killer on the loose you know. This whole town is on edge.

BENITO  
I'm glad you have a weapon to protect you then. Your grandma must have seen this coming..

Luisa begins placing the salmon fillets on the sizzling pan.

LUISA  
My grandma was definitely one of a kind. She always made sure I was protected.



BENITO  
Do you need help with anything?

LUISA  
Mm. I can show you how to cook the salmon!

BENITO  
Luisa. I know how to cook salmon.

Luisa looks at him with a serious face.

BENITO (CONT'D)  
I just said I didn't know how to make it to setup our uh..date.

LUISA  
Mentiroso!

Benito chuckles. They're standing across the kitchen from each other.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
So a killer is on the loose.

BENITO  
Who would've thought? In this puny town. Feels like Haddonfield.

LUISA  
Nah, this town is too boring.

Luisa flips the salmon fillet with some tongs.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
This might sound weird. But, I can't get over how I feel about you. I feel like I've known you for a long time.

BENITO  
Luisa, it's been three days.

LUISA  
Well, a lot has happened in three days.

Luisa stirs the pasta noodles floating in the pot.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
Question. Why are you attracted to me? Besides the obvious reason of being a psychopath..

Benito takes the spoon from Luisa and begins to stir. Luisa watches.

BENITO

I guess to quote your own words,  
I'm attracted to your energy. Plus  
other things I don't think are  
appropriate right now.

LUISA

Have you ever been in love?

BENITO

I've been in past relationships,  
yes. I thought it was love. But it  
obviously doesn't compare to -

LUISA

Woah, we're not there yet.

Luisa walks out of the kitchen. Omar keeps stirring the noodles.

BENITO

Hey do you wanna check if the wine  
is cold? I definitely need a glass  
right now.

Luisa walks back in with her journal. She opens the fridge and pours a glass of wine. Hands it to Benito.

LUISA

So I was writing earlier.  
Ironically about love. Um, I don't  
know if you've noticed, but I  
actually have no idea how to  
navigate love.

BENITO

Oh trust me, I've noticed.

Benito takes a huge gulp of wine. Luisa opens to the written page in her journal.

LUISA

October 30, 2022. Love was not  
designed to be understood. Love is  
constant. Constantly neglected or  
embraced. Constantly shaping us or  
holding us together. Love reassures  
us that we belong, wherever love  
may be. Love holds us accountable  
to each other. It doesn't hide nor  
run.

(MORE)

LUISA (CONT'D)

We tend to build walls and shut it out. We mistake it for something less worthy. That's our human way. I'm learning to have faith in love. What a day to learn what love is. Rather, a lifetime filled with moments to learn the power love has.

BENITO

Sometimes love requires sacrifice. If not, it isn't love.

LUISA

I like that.

Luisa and Benito lock eyes. She breaks the lock and turns to pour herself a glass of wine. Takes a sip. Avoids eye contact.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Do you wanna be a writer too? Maybe you should start journaling.

BENITO

I actually have a diary too.

LUISA

Man, I'd pay big bucks to read that diary.

They both take sips of their drinks. Luisa takes out the salmon. Places them on two plates. Pours a spoon full of pasta as well.

BENITO

That diary is hidden so good even I forget where I put it sometimes.

BENITO (CONT'D)

Wow. The salmon smells so good.

LUISA

If you moan while eating, I get to read your diary.

Benito chuckles.

BENITO

That's a bet.

INT. LUISA'S DINING ROOM - SAME NIGHT

They sit at the dining room table. Their plates in front of them. Benito is about to take a first bite.

                  LUISA  
Do you mind if I pray?

                  BENITO  
Go for it.

He puts his fork down. They both are in a posture of prayer.

                  LUISA  
Thank you for this food. Thank you  
for the strength given to us. Thank  
you for protecting and guiding us,  
Heavenly Father. Forgive us for our  
sins. Amen.

They begin to take bites of the salmon. Benito lets out a moan.

                  LUISA (CONT'D)  
Benito, please. No moaning at the  
table.

                  BENITO  
What did you do to this salmon?  
This is so good!

                  LUISA  
I think the question is: when can I  
read your diary?

Benito's mouth is full.

                  BENITO  
Oh. I don't think you wanna read  
it. The voices in my head tend to  
vomit all over the pages.

                  LUISA  
Ah. So it should be a fun read!

                  BENITO  
How about you come over next week?  
I can read it to you while you make  
us this amazing meal all over  
again.

Luisa and Benito continue to eat their dinner. They laugh, talk, and drink wine.

FADE OUT.

INT. LUISA'S LIVING ROOM - SAME NIGHT

Luisa and Benito sit next to each other on the couch. Luisa is about to turn on the TV with the remote.

BENITO

I only ask because I want to know as much as I can about you. But, what happened to your father?

Luisa puts down the TV remote. She looks over to the TV cabinets. She walks to them and pulls out a picture book.

LUISA

My grandma did such a great job of keeping me from him that I have no idea who or where he is. He could be dead and I would never have known.

Luisa turns to the early pages in the book. A picture of a teenage boy and girl stand next to each other. The boy looks miserable. The girl is smiling from cheek to cheek.

LUISA (CONT'D)

This is the only picture he's in. It was taken the day after I was conceived.

BENITO

That's why your mom looks so happy.

Luisa chuckles. She stares at the picture.

LUISA

They met at a gas station when they were both seventeen. My mom was the flirt and my dad just fell for her I guess. My mom said he chose her over this other girl he was dating.

BENITO

And why did they keep you from him?

LUISA

According to my grandmother's journal, they didn't want me to see the real him.

(MORE)

LUISA (CONT'D)

My parents had a terrible relationship, so I understand why they're preventing me from contacting him.

BENITO

But would you ever want to meet him?

LUISA

Of course. But what if he's the best man in the world and my entire life I believed the opposite?

BENITO

Or he could have ended up as a serial killer. I mean look at that face.

They both stare at the picture. Suddenly, bright red and blue lights flash through the living room window. Luisa looks up. Police sirens hail.

BENITO (CONT'D)

The cops must have a suspect by now.

LUISA

(worried)

You think so?

Luisa frantically searches for the TV remote.

BENITO

Luisa, are you okay? We should be safe here.

Luisa continues to look for the remote on the couch.

LUISA

God damnit. Just help me look for the remote.

Benito follows her orders. He reaches for the remote peaking under Luisa's leg. Luisa smacks his hand.

BENITO

Luisa, it's under your leg.

Benito pulls the remote slowly.

BENITO (CONT'D)

What did you do, Luisa?

The police sirens fade out. Luisa takes a deep breath and turns on the TV with the remote. Benito is locked on Luisa. A lady appears on the screen.

NEWS REPORTER

Continuing with the mysterious death of 26 year old, Omar Alonso. His body was found slaughtered inside a local coffee shop. Police are still searching for any evidence surrounding this tragic murder.

Omar's body is blurred with the blood staining the floor on the TV screen. The news anchor appears.

NEWS ANCHOR

What a scene. This town is too small to not find the suspect. I'd suggest he'd come out of hiding before the police catches him.

LUISA

Why do they always assume men are only capable of killing?

BENITO

Historically, men have the psychotic drive. Also, emotions could be another factor.

LUISA

Man, I'm so glad I -

Benito lets out a deep gasp. He quickly stands up from the couch.

BENITO

You fucking killed Omar.

Luisa puts her hands on her head. She gets up from the couch too and faces Benito.

LUISA

Benito, he was driving me crazy. I couldn't take his toxic bullshit anymore -

BENITO

That's no excuse to kill anyone.

LUISA

I really don't need a guilt trip right now.

(MORE)

LUISA (CONT'D)

Or a life lesson on why killing is bad. It's already done with. Help me figure out how to-

BENITO

No mames, Luisa. I can't partake in-

LUISA

Then you can fucking leave, Benito.

Luisa points to the door.

BENITO

Or what? You're going to stab me too?!

Luisa runs out of the living room. She comes back running with her knife. Threateningly points it at Benito.

LUISA

I did it once.

Benito walks closer to the knife. They're inches from each other's faces.

BENITO

I dare you.

Luisa brushes the knife on Benito's cheek.

BENITO (CONT'D)

You won't.

LUISA

Why not?

BENITO

You tell me.

LUISA

Because I love you.

Luisa throws the knife to the floor. Benito grabs Luisa's face. They both embrace and kiss each other. He carries Luisa into her bedroom.

INT. LUISA'S BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

Luisa and Benito press into each other. They share passionate and intimate moments with each other.

FADE OUT.



INT. LUISA'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Luisa wakes up with the bed sheet wrapped around her. She opens one eye then the next. She looks around her room. Benito is gone. She lays on her back and rubs her head. She groans.

LUISA

Please tell me last night was a dream.

Luisa begins to sniff. She slowly gets up and looks for her phone. The bedroom door slams open. Benito is holding two coffee mugs.

BENITO

I didn't know how you liked your coffee. I just added a splash of oatmilk.

Benito hands her the mug. Luisa smiles and takes a sip.

LUISA

That's exactly how I like it.

She gives him a kiss. She chugs the whole cup in one sitting. Luisa gives back the empty cup to Benito.

BENITO

I thought we'd enjoy our coffee and sip slowly, but okay.

LUISA

There's no time. I'm sorry, I need to figure my shit out before I'm fucked.

Benito takes a small sip of his coffee.

BENITO

You're not going to like this idea.

LUISA

Tell me.

BENITO

If your dad is as mysterious as he sounds, then the only option would be is to plant it on him.

LUISA

My dad? No one has seen him in years.

BENITO  
Only you haven't seen him.

LUISA  
I need to figure out who he is. He probably changed his name. Or fled the country.

Luisa grabs her phone. She dials a number.

CARMINA (O.S.)  
Ay, gracias a dios. Luisa, you need to look at the news. The whole town is worried.

LUISA  
Ma, I need your help. Come over.

Luisa hangs up the phone. Benito is drinking his coffee sitting on the edge of her bed.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
It's best to catch her off guard when it comes to my dad. It might get ugly.

BENITO  
Should I be here?

LUISA  
Of course. You can't go anywhere now. You're in too deep.

Luisa leans in for a kiss. She looks at his mug.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
You drink very slow Benito.

BENITO  
Tell me what your mom is like then.

LUISA  
Mm. She'll be nice to you because she's nice to everyone. She cares too much what others think of her. Whatever you do, don't take the Lord's name in vain. That's a serious offense.

BENITO  
God, what did I get myself into?

LUISA  
Strike one!

BENITO  
Oh fuck, that was coincidental.

LUISA  
Haha. You're trying to score mom points while a killer is on the loose. That's funny.

BENITO  
I just want your mom to like me!

LUISA  
Focus, Benito!

Luisa quickly tidies her bedroom. Benito gets up from her bed. He watches her while sipping his coffee.

BENITO  
We still need to talk about last night.

Luisa exits the bedroom.

INT. LUISA'S LIVING ROOM - SAME MORNING

Luisa walks through the living room. She fixes misplaced things. Benito follows behind her.

LUISA  
What is there to talk about?

BENITO  
It's clear we both like each other. Right?

LUISA  
Si.

BENITO  
Whatever happens Luisa, it's you and me.

LUISA  
This is crazy right?

Benito grabs her hand. He kisses the back of her hand.

BENITO  
Of course. Nothing new there.

LUISA

I don't understand how you're accepting my craziness. That just makes you crazy too.

BENITO

I just love the way you embrace your crazy, psychotic, and twisted self.

He kisses her cheeks. He puts the coffee mug down. Luisa grabs his face and kisses Benito's lips. Benito carries Luisa and pushes her up against the wall. Luisa's legs are wrapped around his waist.

There's a knock on the door. Luisa and Benito are out of breath. They quickly let go of each other.

LUISA

She's here.

Luisa fixes her hair. She opens the front door. Benito grabs his cup of coffee and takes a huge gulp. Carmina walks in with open arms.

CARMINA

Mi chiquita.

Carmina kisses Luisa's cheek. Luisa has a worried look on her face. Carmina puts Luisa's head on her shoulder. She kisses her head.

LUISA

I did something bad, mamá.

Luisa lets out a single tear. They both hold tight to each other.

CARMINA

Luisa, que pasó?

Luisa lets go of Carmina. Carmina sees Benito standing in the living room.

CARMINA (CONT'D)

Y quién es?

Carmina stares at Benito. Benito lets out a small smile.

LUISA

This is Benito. No es importante, mamá.

Luisa grabs Carmina's hand and leads her to the couch to sit.

LUISA (CONT'D)

You wanna make another batch of coffee for my mom, Benito?

Benito hurries into the kitchen with his empty mug. Luisa and Carmina sit alone in the living room.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Mamá, I know this isn't going to be easy for you. Pero, I need you to tell me everything about papí.

Carmina scowls. Luisa leans back from her a little.

CARMINA

You know we do not talk about him, Luisa.

LUISA

Mamá, es importante. Por favór, ayudame.

Carmina turns away. Luisa gets up to retrieve the photo album. She opens it to the picture of young Carmina and her father. Carmina stares deeply into it.

CARMINA

What do you want to know?

LUISA

Todo.

Benito walks in with a cup of coffee.

BENITO

I didn't know if you'd like sweetener or milk, so I put it on the side Carmina.

CARMINA

Gracias.

Carmina has a stern look still. She takes the coffee mug. Takes a slow sip. She releases a deep sigh.

CARMINA (CONT'D)

Su padre es de México.

LUISA

Inglés, mamá.

CARMINA

Ay, perdon.

Luisa rubs her hand.

CARMINA (CONT'D)

Your father and I met at a gas station in Monterrey, México. I just turned seventeen. It was the summer I turned pretty, according to your grandmother.

Carmina continues to hold and stare at the faded image. Stay on picture.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. MEXICAN GAS STATION - SUMMER DAY 1984

17 year old Carmina slams the truck door. She holds a few pesos (Mexican bills) as she walks into the gas station. The sun is burning down on her and the gravel pavement she's walking on. Carmina's mother, Ana, calls out to her from the truck.

ANA

Andalé! Nosotras vamos a llegar tarde.

Carmina turns and waves her mother off. She begins to count the money in her hand. She looks down as she stands in front of the convenient store door. She reaches for the door handle still looking down. She touches a hand that's already on it. Luisa's father's, RAUL, hand. Carmina looks up to the young boy staring straight at her.

RAUL

Ladies first.

Carmina quickly puts her hand down. She gasps.

CARMINA

Me susto. Perdon.

Raul opens the door for Carmina. They both exchange smiles to each other. They have a moment.

INT. MEXICAN CONVENIENT STORE - SAME DAY

Carmina slowly walks in the store. Her smile doesn't fade. A horn blares in the background. Carmina ignores it. She fixes her hair and wipes the sweat above her lips.

Raul walks to the alcohol section. He looks at Carmina in between strides. Carmina is in line to pay at the cash register.

ATTENDANT

Siguiente persona.

Carmina turns her head to see Raul grabbing a 24 oz beer from a cooler.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

Mija! Eres la siguiente?

Carmina quickly walks forward and places the pesos on the counter. She's out of breath.

CARMINA

Para numero cuarto. Por fa.

Carmina walks out of the store. Raul follows her with his eyes.

EXT. MEXICAN GAS STATION - SAME DAY

Ana is waiting outside the truck. She wipes off sweat from her forehead.

ANA

What took you so long?

Ana begins to pump the truck with gas.

CARMINA

Nada. I got distracted. Perdon.

Carmina turns around to face the store. Raul walks out the store with the beer in one hand and a box of cigarettes in the other. He puts the beer on the floor. He looks around and spots Carmina. They lock eyes.

Raul pulls out a cigarette and a lighter from his pocket. He lights it while looking at Carmina. He picks up the beer and takes a long sip.

Carmina is frozen looking at Raul. Ana lets go of the pump. She opens the truck door.

ANA

Vamos, Carmina.

Carmina doesn't move. Ana notices she's staring at Raul.

ANA (CONT'D)

Ah, él no.

Raul takes a hit of the cigarette. A girl walks towards him and grabs his beer. She takes a sip of it. His eyes are still on Carmina.

ANA (CONT'D)

Tipos como él nunca serán buenos para ti. Ver. He only has one type, and you are not it. Me escuchas, Carmina?

Carmina looks at Raul and the other girl. She puts her head down and gets into the truck with her mother. She slams the door. Ana begins driving.

INT. ANA'S TRUCK - SAME DAY

Carmina continues to watch Raul and the other girl through the rearview mirror.

FADE OUT.

FADE TO:

INT. LUISA'S LIVING ROOM - PRESENT DAY

Carmina lets go of the picture.

CARMINA

Your grandmother always knew it from the moment Raul and I met. Deep down I knew it too, but my desire for him overtook me. That was just the beginning. I remember we were going shopping en las tiendas for a prom dress that day. Your grandmother insisted she could sew one, but I wanted a store-bought dress.

FADE OUT.

FADE TO:

INT. ANA'S HOUSE - SUMMER 1984 DAY

Carmina and Ana walk in the doorway. Carmina is holding a long emerald green dress. She's smiling as she sets it on the couch.



CARMINA  
Mamá, can you do my makeup for  
prom?

ANA  
Ay, miija. You know you don't need  
makeup.

Carmina holds up the dress to her body and looks at the  
mirror.

CARMINA  
Yo sé. Pero I want to look perfect.

ANA  
Do you have a date yet?

CARMINA  
No. No one has asked me.

Ana holds a cup of coffee and her journal. She looks at  
Carmina through the mirror. She takes a seat on a chair.

ANA  
Que linda.

Ana opens her journal and begins to write. Carmina places the  
dress in her bedroom. Ana sits alone in the living room  
drinking her coffee.

FADE OUT.

FADE TO:

INT. LUISA'S LIVING ROOM - PRESENT DAY

Carmina picks up her coffee and signals Benito to refill it.  
Benito quickly gets the empty mug. He leaves to the kitchen.

CARMINA  
I was so excited for the prom. Your  
grandmother had no idea I was only  
going for Raul. Or maybe she did.  
Either way it was a total  
nightmare.

Luisa is intrigued. Carmina continues with the story.

FADE OUT.

FADE TO:

INT. ANA'S LIVING ROOM - PROM NIGHT 1984

Ana is fixing Carmina's makeup in front of the mirror.  
Carmina admires her dress through the mirror.

ANA

Que linda! You have the lipstick to  
reapply when you get there?

CARMINA

Si, mamá. I'm kind of nervous.

ANA

Porque? You are the most beautiful  
girl. Don't doubt it. Just own your  
beauty Carmina.

Ana gives Carmina a sweet kiss on her forehead.

CARMINA

I wish papí was here to see me.

ANA

Me too, hija. Lista? Vamos,  
Carmina.

Carmina looks at herself once more in the mirror, all dressed  
up. She smiles at herself.

INT. HACIENDA - PROM NIGHT 1984

Carmina walks through two big doors. Her dress follows behind  
her. The inside of the hacienda-type venue is filled with  
teenagers in dresses and tuxedos. Music is blaring through  
the surround sound speakers. Lights flash to the middle of  
the dance floor. Waiters dressed in white serve plates of  
food to each table.

Carmina's English teacher, MS. FUJARTE, walks by Carmina.

MS. FUJARTE

Ay, que bonita tu vestido, Carmina.

Carmina lets out a huge smile.

CARMINA

Gracias, Ms. Fujarte. Do I sit  
anywhere?

MS. FUJARTE

Si. Find any empty chair. We're  
about to announce the Prom King and  
Queen.

Carmina searches the venue. She walks through each table to find an empty seat. A table occupies three people. She sits in an empty chair.

Ms. Fujarte walks to the middle of the stage and grabs the microphone.

MS. FUJARTE (CONT'D)

Estudiantes, vamos a empezar  
announcing the 1984 Prom King and  
Queen.

Students cheer. Carmina begins to eat from her dinner plate. Ms. Fujarte receives two envelopes. She opens them and gives a warm smile.

MS. FUJARTE (CONT'D)

This year's Prom King is Tomás De  
La Fuente.

Clapping and cheering occur. The student walks up to the stage to receive a crown and sash. Ms. Fujarte announces the queen. Carmina finishes her plate. She takes a sip of water. She begins to scan the venue.

CARMINA

Have any of you seen Raul?

A girl, DIANA, sitting across from Carmina gives a chuckle.

DIANA

Do you really believe Raul would  
come to prom?

Carmina puts down her head. Diana lets out another chuckle. The venue doors swing open. Raul storms in with his date, SOFIA, both color-coordinated in their prom attire. He is holding a tequila bottle in one hand and his other hand is holding Sofia's arm. He can barely walk straight. He stumbles through the dance floor.

Ms. Fujarte notices the commotion. Both the Prom King and Queen are standing beside her on stage.

MS. FUJARTE

Mr. Fregoso, please settle down.  
Security please escort them out.  
Alcohol is impermissible at school  
events.

Two security guards go to the middle of the stage. Carmina and the entire student body stares at them. Carmina stands up from her seat.

Raul is fighting the security guards. They finally escort Raul and Sofia out of the venue.

DIANA

What are you doing, Carmina? Sit down.

Carmina rapidly gets up and follows the security guards. The security guards are holding onto Raul still.

EXT. HACIENDA - PROM NIGHT 1984

CARMINA

Hey!

The security guards release Raul. Raul looks past Sofia and sees Carmina. Raul drops the liquor bottle. The security guards walk inside the venue.

SECURITY GUARD

Permanecer fuera de la propiedad.

Carmina walks towards Raul.

SOFIA

Quien es?

RAUL

Nadie.

Raul walks towards Carmina.

RAUL (CONT'D)

You're from the gas station. Verdad?

SOFIA

Gas station?

Sofia looks at Carmina with disgust. Carmina smiles at Raul.

CARMINA

You remember me, Raul?

SOFIA

Of course he doesn't -

RAUL

YA! Sofia!

Raul walks over to Carmina.

RAUL (CONT'D)

Su nombre?

CARMINA

Carmina.

Raul grabs Carmina's waist with full force. Carmina looks up into Raul's eyes. They gaze into each other. Sofia is looking at them.

SOFIA

Raul!

FADE OUT.

FADE TO:

INT. LUISA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Carmina sits on the sofa with a smile on her face. Luisa stands up from the sofa. Benito is looking at both of them.

LUISA

So he was an alcoholic and womanizer. How original.

CARMINA

Later that night, I let him take advantage of me. It was prom night. There was definitely love in the air. Or so I thought...

LUISA

Mamá, I need to tell you something. Please listen.

Carmina leans in to Luisa. Luisa avoids eye contact with her mother. Benito uncomfortably fidgets.

CARMINA

Que pasó, Luisa? Dimé.

LUISA

I killed Omar. It was me.

Luisa stares into her mother's eyes.

LUISA (CONT'D)

I couldn't take it anymore, mamá. He was just a waste of space. I think I did every girl a favor.

Carmina doesn't say a word. She stares at Luisa, then begins to wonder around her living room.

CARMINA  
Where's your knife, Luisa?

Luisa gives an eyeroll and shakes her head.

LUISA  
No. You're not taking it from me. I have a plan. Please, just listen for once.

CARMINA  
Dónde está su cuchillo?

Carmina is standing shouting at Luisa. Benito's mouth is wide open. Luisa stands up and stomps to her bedroom. Carmina paces back and forth.

CARMINA (CONT'D)  
Tu pinche abuela nunca debería haberte dado ese cuchillo. Te lo escondí por este motivo. I knew it.

Luisa stomps back into the living room. She holds the knife in her hand. She breathes heavily. Carmina takes it from her.

CARMINA (CONT'D)  
Luisa. What the fuck are you going to do now?

BENITO  
We have a plan.

Carmina looks at Benito.

CARMINA  
Did you help her? How can you live with yourself?

LUISA  
He had nothing to do with it, mamá.

CARMINA  
Well he must really want to sleep with you if he's helping you cover your mess.

LUISA  
It's called love. You wouldn't know what that is.

Carmina walks to Luisa. She points the knife to her.

CARMINA  
Que cabrona? Vas a ver.

LUISA  
Mamá. We have a plan. Put the  
fucking knife down.

CARMINA  
It doesn't feel good to be on the  
other end of it, verdad?

Carmina holds the knife. She puts it down slowly, still  
holding it tightly.

LUISA  
Do you know where Raul could be? We  
need to find him.

BENITO  
And kill him.

CARMINA  
No mames, Luisa. Otro?

LUISA  
We need to plant Omar's murder. If  
Raul is such a terrible person with  
nothing worth living for. Then why  
not?

CARMINA  
You're both mentos. Psychotic. You  
want to find and kill your father?  
Fine. The last time we saw each  
other was the day after your  
grandma's death. He lives on East  
Duranta.

LUISA  
Alone?

CARMINA  
No sé.

They all pace around the living room.

LUISA  
Mira. This man was absent my entire  
life. He's a stranger to me. I know  
it's a fucked up thing to even  
consider. But, I am not going to  
jail because of my stupid ex.

CARMINA

Then why did you kill him?!

LUISA

Because I thought that's what grandma wanted me to do. Why else would she give me her knife?

CARMINA

Your grandma had her own problems, Luisa. That's how she protected herself.

LUISA

So why can't I do the same?

CARMINA

Why do you want to be like her so bad, Luisa?

LUISA

She was the only person who has ever understood me!

Luisa's face is red with tears bursting. Benito is sitting on the sofa while Luisa and Carmina stand facing each other.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Mamá, you don't understand how difficult it is to live everyday with so many voices screaming inside your head, pulling you in different directions. You will never understand the daily torment to just live.

Luisa wipes her face.

LUISA (CONT'D)

I know I screwed up. I know. I will ask for forgiveness every day. But, I need my knife.

Carmina places the knife on the table. She grabs her belongings and walks to the door.

CARMINA

If this is how you want to live your life, I don't want to be a part of it.

Carmina walks out of Luisa's house. Luisa grabs the knife. Benito goes towards her and holds her face. He kisses her forehead.



BENITO  
 We're going to get through this.  
 I'm here, Luisa.

Luisa snuffles and gives a chuckle.

LUISA  
 That was actually better than I  
 expected.

BENITO  
 Should we check the news?

Luisa grabs the remote and turns on the news channel.

NEWS ANCHOR  
 Still no suspect for the mysterious  
 death of Omar -

LUISA  
 We need to move <sup>20</sup>fast.

BENITO  
 Tonight?

Luisa clutches the knife and stares into the TV. A picture of Omar is on the screen.

FADE OUT.

FADE TO:

INT. LUISA'S CAR - NIGHT

Luisa and Benito slowly drive into a street. Benito is in the driver's seat and Luisa sits on the passenger side. Houses line up symmetrical from each other side of the street. The car slows down. Benito pulls the car onto the left side of the street.

LUISA  
 Which house do you think it is?

BENITO  
 If he's living alone like your  
 mother said, then probably the  
 smallest or biggest house.

LUISA  
 Should we just ask if they know  
 where he lives?

Benito parks the car. They both get down.

BENITO  
Remember the plan. We got this.

EXT. RANDOM LADY'S HOUSE - SAME NIGHT

Luisa knocks on a yellow door. A lady peaks through the window screen next to it. She doesn't move.

ELDERLY LADY  
Who are you?

LUISA  
I'm looking for Raul Fregoso. Do you know which house he lives in?

ELDERLY LADY  
It's the house with the boarded up windows. Up the street.

LUISA  
Gracias.

They get back into the car. Benito is driving slow.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
Here.

Luisa gets down holding her purse. The knife rests inside of it. She begins to walk up the driveway. Benito remains in the car. The windows in the front of the house are boarded up with wood. Roof shingles are missing.

Luisa takes a deep breath. As she places her fist on the door, it opens.

RAUL  
Who are you?

Raul hides behind the door. Luisa stares at him. They're both frozen on opposite ends of the doorway.

LUISA  
I'm Luisa.

INT. RAUL'S DOORWAY - SAME NIGHT

Raul opens the door wide open. His arms extend in front of him to embrace Luisa. Luisa doesn't budge. Raul's eyes begin to tear. Raul walks closer to Luisa.

RAUL  
Where have you been, mí hija?

Luisa makes a confused look. She slowly walks into the hug.

LUISA  
Me? Where have you been my whole  
life?

RAUL  
Come in!

Luisa turns to see Benito sitting in the drivers seat. She signals him to join her inside.

LUISA  
My boyfriend is here too. If you  
don't mind?

RAUL  
Of course not. Pasale!

Benito stands next to Luisa. He holds her hand and gives her a reassuring nod. Luisa is looking at the pictures on the walls. The pictures are Raul and Carmina when they were young.

BENITO  
He's not as evil as your mom made  
him to be.

LUISA  
Shh.

Raul guides them to the couch.

RAUL  
Quieres un cafecito o pán dulce?

LUISA  
No estamos bien. Gracias.

Raul leaves to the kitchen. Luisa and Benito sit on the couch. Raul comes back in with a plate of empanadas and conchas.

RAUL  
So, what made you come to visit?

LUISA  
I thought it was time to finally  
meet you. Out of curiosity I guess.

RAUL  
Curiosa?

LUISA

Si. Why did you leave my mom?

Raul leaves to the kitchen. Benito and Luisa look at each other sitting on the couch. Luisa clutches her purse.

Raul runs into the living room. He's holding a kitchen knife and stands in front of Benito and Luisa. Benito puts his hands up slowly.

RAUL

It's no secret. I have a bad past.  
Su pinche madre kept me from you.  
She didn't want you to become like  
me.

Luisa pulls out her knife from her purse. She stands up.

LUISA

Trust me, I didn't. But, my grandma  
taught me how to protect myself  
from men like you.

She puts the knife up to Raul's face.

BENITO

I've seen it firsthand. Luisa  
doesn't mess around.

RAUL

Callaté! Or I'll slit your throat  
too.

LUISA

I dare you! Touch him and I'll cut  
you into tiny fucking pieces.

Luisa and Raul are standing facing each other. Their knives are facing each other. Both ready to attack.

LUISA (CONT'D)

I've dealt with too many fuckers  
like you. This is where it ends.

RAUL

Ya lo veremos.

Raul swings his knife at Luisa. Luisa steps back. She jumps over the couch. Raul follows after. Benito stands by the door. Luisa never puts her back towards Raul.

RAUL (CONT'D)

Your grandma taught you well.

Luisa stabs Raul's upper thigh. A minor wound stains his pants.

RAUL (CONT'D)

Chingao.

Raul applies pressure to his thigh. Blood streams down his pants. Raul lays down on the wooden floor. He drops his knife. Luisa bends down to pick it up.

RAUL (CONT'D)

Look at you. You ended up just like me. Your grandma would be so -

Luisa slits his throat with his own knife. Raul's dead body oozes with blood. Luisa is breathing heavily. She pulls a few hairs from Raul's scalp and dips them in his blood.

LUISA

Where's the bag?

Benito takes out a plastic bag from Luisa's purse. He opens the bag and Luisa puts the hairs inside.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Vamos.

INT. LUISA'S CAR - NIGHT

Luisa and Benito are parked outside of the coffee shop. Yellow police tape is wrapped around the front door. A police officer walks out of the coffee shop and enters a police car. It drives away.

LUISA

Try not to touch so many things.

Benito puts on two black gloves and a black baseball cap. He gets the plastic bag of Raul's hair and blood.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Wait!

A truck speeds through the street. Benito stays in the driver's seat. He opens the door.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Hurry.

Benito crosses the street. He pulls up the yellow tape just enough to go under it.

Luisa watches him go inside the impermissible coffee shop. Luisa scratches her head and turns up the stereo as she sits in the passenger seat. A late 90s pop song plays. She bumps her head to the beat. Luisa looks down the street. Benito walks in front of the car to get to the driver seat.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Listo?

BENITO

The body wasn't there. I placed the hair on the floor where his body was. Call it in.

Luisa smiles at Benito. She leans in to kiss him on the cheek. Luisa takes out her phone.

LUISA

I'd like to report a suspect for Omar Alonso's homicide.

Benito begins to drive. He speeds down the street. He takes off the gloves and throws them out the window. Luisa remains on the phone.

DISPATCHER (O.S.)

Who is the suspect, ma'am?

LUISA

Raul Fregoso.

Benito parks at the cemetery. Luisa hangs up the phone. They both get out of her car.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Benito turns on a flash light to guide them to Ana's gravestone. Luisa holds the two knives. She stabs them both in the ground in front of Ana's gravestone.

LUISA

Para ti.

Benito grabs Luisa's hand. He kisses it. Luisa stares at the two knives in the grass.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alyssa Sandoval received a Bachelor of Science in Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas at Austin, with a minor in U.S. Latinx Media Studies in 2020. Additionally, she graduated with a Master's in Fine Arts, specializing in the Creative Writing area, at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in 2023.

Alyssa Sandoval currently resides in the Rio Grande Valley, where she continues to teach secondary level English and Writing courses at a local school district. She can be contacted at [alyssa4.sandoval@gmail.com](mailto:alyssa4.sandoval@gmail.com).