

(Being Free)

by
(Traci Ford)

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EXT. HOSPITAL -NIGHT

An ambulance pulls up lights and sirens going. A car pulls up behind as the EMTs pull a gurney with a man, MITCHELL JUAREZ from the rear of the rig. A doctor meets them at the door.

EMT
(shouting)
57 year-old-male unresponsive. Possible
stroke! Pulse one-twenty! Pressure two
hundred over one-thirty!

The EMT's voice trails off as he, his partner and a doctor wheel MITCHELL through the ER doors. A man, MANNY JUAREZ and a woman, FRIDA TAYLOR, get out of the car and follow them into the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL -NIGHT

MANNY attempts to follow the EMT and doctor into the exam room and FRIDA is not far behind him.

NURSE
Sir? You can't go in there.

MANNY
That's my Pop!

NURSE
The doctors need space and you need to fill
out some forms.

FRIDA and the nurse pull MANNY toward the admitting desk.

FRIDA
Manny, come on. You know Mitchell's history
better than I do. Help me fill these out and let
the doctors do what they need to for him.

MANNY
Free--

FRIDA
I know, Manny. I know. Just come over here
and help me out, OK?

The nurse hands FRIDA a clipboard with some papers on it. FRIDA pulls MANNY over to some chairs and sits him down. MANNY stares at the floor, stunned.

MANNY

I jus' saw him, Free. He was fine!

FRIDA

Forms.

FRIDA smiles slightly and hands MANNY the clipboard. MANNY sighs and takes the clipboard from her.

FRIDA

You want me to call Mom?

MANNY

Why?

FRIDA

Come on, now. They may be divorced, but you know they still talk to each other.

MANNY

Whatever.

FRIDA shakes her head and walks over to the admitting desk. The nurse seated behind the desk has her head down, reading a chart.

FRIDA

Excuse me? Where's a safe place for me to use my cell phone?

The nurse nods and points toward the entrance.

FRIDA

OK. Let's try this again. Miss, can you tell me where I can safely use my cell phone. My sign language is a little rusty.

The NURSE looks up and rolls her eyes.

NURSE

You can't here on this level, ma'am, you hafta go outside. Through that exit and down one flight.

FRIDA

Now that wasn't so hard, was it?

FRIDA walks out of the exit.

INT. KITCHEN -NIGHT

MAGGIE JUAREZ is sitting at her kitchen table with her grandson, NICCOLO. There's a plate of chicken and rice in front of him.

MAGGIE

Come on, now Moosh. If you want some watermelon you have to eat some more dinner.

NICCOLO

No, Gramma! Wat'melon! Wat'melon!

The phone rings and MAGGIE wipes her hands.

MAGGIE

OK. When Papa gets home, I'm gonna tell him you didn't finish your dinner.

NICCOLO'S eyes get big.

NICCOLO

Gramma no tell Papa!

MAGGIE

Hello?... Hello, Frida. I can't-- ...What?! ... Where's Manny?... OK, OK. I'll be there as fast as I can!

MAGGIE clicks the receiver and starts to dial.

MAGGIE

Nicci, Gramma has to go see your papa. You want to see Tio Brian?

NICCI jumps down from the chair and starts to clap and dance around the table.

NICCI

I see papa, too!

MAGGIE
Later, Mooshie.

NICCI
No chicken?

MAGGIE
(smiling)
Wat'melon.

NICCI
No chicken! No chicken!

INT. BEDROOM -1970-NIGHT

Six-year-old FRIDA, is watching TV dressed in a pink and white ruffle dress, white stockings and pink patent leather shoes. The doorbell rings and FRIDA slides from the bed and tiptoes to the doorway just as a younger MAGGIE is opening the door. A younger MITCHELL is standing there with a box under one arm and a large bouquet of pretty orange flowers in another. MAGGIE kisses MITCHELL and FRIDA giggles.

MAN
So, this must be Frida! Maggie, you said she was pretty, but you didn't say she looked like an angel!

FRIDA giggles again. MITCHELL bends down and holds out the box.

MAGGIE
Mitchell, I told you not to make a fuss. She's spoiled enough already.

MITCHELL
It's not up to you to say, Maggie. It's what I wanted to do.

MITCHELL motions to FRIDA.

MITCHELL
Besides, how could I not bring something to this angel?

FRIDA walks slowly over to MITCHELL and takes the box. MAGGIE looks on, clearly angry.

MAGGIE
What do you say, little girl?

FRIDA
(whispers)
Thank you.

MAGGIE
I can't hear you, Frida.

MITCHELL
She wasn't thanking you, Maggie. I heard her
just fine.

FRIDA looks at the box and then looks at MITCHELL and he winks at her.

MITCHELL
Go ahead, angel. Open it.

FRIDA squeals with delight when she pulls out a small doll with a heavy head and a soft plushy body. The doll is dressed in oriental garb and it's small face is painted white with bright red lips and it's eyes are bright and black. FRIDA hugs the doll.

FRIDA
Thank you so much, Mister.

MAGGIE
You know the man's name, Frida. Mr. Juarez.

MITCHELL
Mitchell is fine, angel girl. I'd like a beer
Maggie.

MAGGIE blinks for a moment then turns and walks into the kitchen.

MITCHELL
Make sure it's cold.

INT. 1970 - BEDROOM -NIGHT

FRIDA goes into her room as MITCHELL walks into the living room. FRIDA lays her doll on her pillows and stares at it. Then FRIDA looks around her room and sees a picture of herself beneath a big tree. FRIDA picks it up and leaves her room.

INT. LIVING ROOM -NIGHT

FRIDA walks over to MITCHELL and hands him the picture.

FRIDA

I had jus' come down the tree. I climb trees all the time, but somebody always has ta come up an' get me. I climbed down all by myself that day.

MITCHELL looks at the picture.

MITCHELL

What a big, brave girl you are!

FRIDA giggles, self-consciously and runs out of the living room.

INT. 1970 - HALLWAY -NIGHT

FRIDA runs into MAGGIE who is headed into the living room holding two beer bottles.

MAGGIE

Little girl, go sit somewhere before you mess up your dress. We'll be leaving soon, so go to the bathroom!

MITCHELL (O.S.)

Maggie stop fussing at her. I'll die of thirst before you get me my beer.

MAGGIE goes into the living room and FRIDA smiles and goes into the bathroom.

INT. PRESENT -PRISON CELL -NIGHT

Two corrections officers, OFFICERS BRIAN BAEZ and STEVE WILKINS are searching a cell when their radios beep.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Officer Baez, come in.

OFFICER BAEZ

Baez, here.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Officer Baez, you have a phone call. It's Mrs. Juarez. She says it's an emergency.

OFFICER BAEZ sighs.

OFFICER WILKINS

Go ahead, Bri. I got this. You off in a few, anywho.

BRIAN

On my way. Over.

INT. OFFICERS LOCKER ROOM -NIGHT

OFFICER BAEZ picks up the receiver and presses a button.

BRIAN

Maggie?

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Brian, I need you to pick up Nicci after work. Mitchell is in the hospital.

BRIAN

Wha' happen?

MAGGIE (O.S.)

I don't know.

BRIAN

Who wit' him?

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Manny and Frida. I just talked to her. Can you do it?

BRIAN

Ok, Maggie. I be dere in a half hour.

MAGGIE

Thank you, Brian.

BRIAN hangs up and shakes his head. He goes over to his locker, hangs his holster, grabs his jacket and leaves.

INT. HOSPITAL -NIGHT

FRIDA and MANNY are sitting in a waiting room. MANNY is staring at his shoes and FRIDA is sitting next to him, her leg bouncing up and down.

MANNY

The last thing I said to Pop was that he shoulda done everyone a favor and died of cancer.

FRIDA

Yikes! Whatcha say that for?

MANNY gets up and walks over to the coffee vending machine. He starts looking in his pockets for some change.

MANNY

We were arguin' 'bout Nicci. He said that I shoulda never had him. That I was thinking with my dick instead of my head. Called 'Liv a 'ho. Said just 'cause she wore a badge didn't mean she was shit.

FRIDA walks over to MANNY and hands him some change.

FRIDA

Mmmm. He said alot. What did you hear?

MANNY

What did I hear?!

FRIDA

'Sides the words. Did you hear the angry ol' man behind 'em?

MANNY takes the money from her, angrily, spilling some to the floor. MANNY bends to pick it up.

MANNY

It's alright for you, ain't it Frida? You never liked him. Never even called him Dad. So, why are you here?

FRIDA turns away and walks back to the chairs.

FRIDA

I'm here for you, Manny. As always.

MANNY slumps and buys a cup of coffee. He walks back over and sits down.

MANNY

I'm sorry.

FRIDA shrugs her shoulders. The doors to the waiting room burst open. MAGGIE walks swiftly to MANNY and hugs him almost knocking FRIDA down.

FRIDA

Sorry, Mom.

MAGGIE

What?

FRIDA

Never come between a mother and her son.

MAGGIE rolls her eyes and turns to MANNY.

MAGGIE

Have you heard anything yet?

MANNY

No, Ma. He's unconscious. They said somethin' 'bout a stroke when they brought 'im in.

MAGGIE

Why didn't you call me sooner?

MANNY

Free called ya as soon as we got here, Ma.

MAGGIE

Yes, but if you had called me when you found him I could have met you here and helped you.

MANNY

You're here now, right? Let it go for crissake!

FRIDA

Manny, I'm gonna go have a cigarette. I'll be right back.

MAGGIE sniffs.

MANNY

'K, Free. Mom, where's Nicci?

MAGGIE

Brian came and picked us up. We dropped him off at Alicia's before we came here.

MANNY

Brian's here?

MAGGIE

Yes. He needed a nicotine fix, too. He's outside polluting his lungs and--.

MANNY

Ma, please!

MAGGIE stiffens and crosses her arms.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE -NIGHT

FRIDA is looking for her lighter when BRIAN walks up and produces his. BRIAN lights her cigarette and then one for himself. They both inhale and exhale at the same time and laugh.

BRIAN

Maggie, Manny or Mitchell?

FRIDA

Sounds like a law firm.

BRIAN

You OK?

FRIDA

Peachy.

They smoke silently for a moment.

BRIAN

What happened?

FRIDA

Olivia called me. She was hysterical. I'd never heard her like that. Anyway, she tells me that I need to get Manny and get over there because Mitchell had passed out and he wasn't breathing. I asked her if she called 911 and she said she called me first.

BRIAN

Wha' she call ya firs' for?

FRIDA flicks her cigarette.

FRIDA

Why you askin' me silly questions?

BRIAN looks at FRIDA and she shrugs and heads toward the door. BRIAN flicks his cigarette and hurries to open the door for her.

BRIAN

Prob'ly passed out on top o' her.

FRIDA stops short.

FRIDA

Olivia?!

BRIAN

Yep.

FRIDA raises an eyebrow.

BRIAN

An' you didn' hear dat from me, 'kay? I don' think dat's what happened, tho'. Lizzy was home--

FRIDA stops walking and Brian plows into her. FRIDA leans against the door and starts to breathe heavily.

FRIDA

(whispers)

God, please, no.

BRIAN

Wassup? You ok?

FRIDA

Yeah. You go ahead. I'll be right there.

BRIAN

Sure?

FRIDA turns to face BRIAN and gives him a broad, toothy grin. BRIAN stares for a moment and then continues into the hospital. FRIDA pulls her cell phone out of her pocket and dials a number.

FRIDA

Olivia?! Olivia, pick up! Listen I'm coming over.

FRIDA closes the phone and lights another cigarette. FRIDA puts her hand in her pocket and her keys jingle. FRIDA pulls out her keys and looks at them for a moment then walks back out of the door and into the parking lot.

INT. CAR-NIGHT

FRIDA is stopped at a light so she lights another cigarette.

FRIDA

That's right, go for the gusto, kiddo. On top of everything else, let's speed the approach of lung cancer.

FRIDA takes a deep pull and holds it for a moment. A car beeps behind FRIDA. FRIDA is still holding in the smoke and her eyes are now closed. The car goes around FRIDA and the occupant pauses to yell something unintelligible. FRIDA lets the smoke out of her lungs and pulls off just as the other car was about to pass her. The driver beeps his horn angrily and FRIDA guns down the street.

FRIDA

Now, kiddo, a car accident would just be melodramatic. Besides, you'd end up in the bed next to his and wouldn't that be a hoot?

FRIDA laughs to herself and turns up the volume on her radio. FRIDA turns a corner and approaches some construction which slows traffic. FRIDA sings along with the song that's ending. Another song begins and she station surfs. She stops when she hears Perry Como singing the theme to "The Godfather". FRIDA's face contorts in anger and tears fill her eyes. FRIDA closes them.

INT. MOVIE THEATER -1972 -NIGHT

A full theater sits still and watches the screen as the deafening sound of gunfire can be heard. Young FRIDA sits with her own bucket of popcorn eating continuously and not moving her eyes off the screen. FRIDA hears whispering next to her and leans forward to look only after the gunfire has stopped. MAGGIE is speaking angrily to MITCHELL and FRIDA smiles and sits back.

WOMAN (O.S.)

(whispers)

Grown people should know better than to bring a small child to a movie like this.

MITCHELL turns around in his seat.

MITCHELL

(whispers)

Ya see? Now that's why you're here with a girlfriend instead of your man. Probably don't have one 'cause o' that big fuckin' mouth o' yours.

FRIDA

(whispers)

This mus' be killin' you, Mom. Always tryin' ta rain all over everything and everybody.

MITCHELL'S hand reaches into the popcorn and FRIDA looks up at him smiling. MITCHELL winks at FRIDA and pops a kernel into her mouth.

INT. FRIDA'S CAR -PRESENT -NIGHT

A beeping horn startles FRIDA and she realizes that traffic has moved. FRIDA pulls up behind the car in front of her. A commercial is playing on the radio and FRIDA turns it down. She notices her reflection in the rear view mirror.

FRIDA

Ghosts all around ya, girl. Guess it's kinda hard for 'em to leave when ya keep playin' 'em in your head like looping rerun. Ol' friends...
NOT!

FRIDA looks for a radio station that's playing music and stops at a jazz station. FRIDA raises her eyes back to her reflection.

FRIDA

When do you let 'em go, Frida? You're always thinkin' 'bout 'em. It's your misery, sure. But it doesn't mean you gotta cherish it. Holdin' onto pain like that can't be good for you.

The line of cars in front of FRIDA starts to move a little faster. FRIDA is keeping pace with traffic, but keeps glancing at her reflection.

FRIDA

You are stuck, my friend. It's long past time for you ta get your shit together. "Sides, it's not about you anymore, is it? You let that man walk around without any fear.'Now look. No, it's all about Lizzy.

EXT. FRIDA'S CAR -NIGHT

Traffic is back to normal and FRIDA picks up speed as she drives along.

EXT. OLIVIA'S HOUSE -PRE-DAWN

OLIVIA opens the screen door of her house to see FRIDA parking. FRIDA walks up the porch stairs and OLIVIA is crying.

FRIDA

Bastard.

INT. OLIVIA'S KITCHEN -PRE-DAWN

OLIVIA is making breakfast. FRIDA watches her buzz around the room in auto pilot. FRIDA smiles and shakes her head.

FRIDA

Ya can't help yourself, can you? I mean you as in the domesticated female...it's almost pathological.

OLIVIA doesn't pause from her tasks.

OLIVIA

Jokes. Always wit' the joking? What is that? How can ya make a joke now?

FRIDA

How can you cook now? I mean look at you.
Your world is fallin' apart around ya and you're
over there makin' me breakfast.

OLIVIA keeps cooking.

FRIDA

(whispers)

OK, Plan B --

FRIDA puts out her cigarette, goes over to OLIVIA and pulls her around to face her.

FRIDA

Your daughter, ya know the little girl who
thinks her mother is the bravest person on the
planet? The little girl who thinks you really are
faster than bullets? You know she told me
once that was the only way she was able ta let
you go ta work every night? She had ta think of
you as bullet-proof. That beautiful, imaginative
little girl has just been moles--

OLIVIA puts her hand over FRIDA'S mouth and shakes her head.

FRIDA

Ya haven't even said the words out loud, have
ya?

OLIVIA pulls away from FRIDA. FRIDA shrugs her shoulders, sits back down
and lights another cigarette.

FRIDA

Your daughter has just been molested by your
boyfriend? Booty call? What-?

OLIVIA

Ay, Dios --!

FRIDA

-And who happens to be my, and I pause here
for a dramatic HAH, ex-stepfather and what
are you doin'? Makin' me breakfast.

OLIVIA

I just don't getcha, Free. Ya feel better now that you makin' me face the music? That's you ain't it? Always figurin' out everyone else's shit, 'cept your own. You so inta making movies that you gotta show everybody their lives in high def? Real life happenin' 'round her an' she makes fuckin' jokes like ususal.

FRIDA takes a pull from her cigarette.

FRIDA

At least I don't charge 'em extra for the hi def.

OLIVIA

I guess some part o' me gits it, tho'. Just a li'l bit. I cook, you make jokes. That's how I can tell there's more to this. That you or somebody you care about had experience with this. Ya think I wanna be cookin' all the time? It's the only thing makes me sane!

FRIDA

Experience. Good word for it. Had experience even before I was supposed to know what experience is. It's been a part of me all my life, Olivia. My old friend. I've made my peace with it. And the really cool thing is I got my pound of flesh without having to lift a finger!

FRIDA looks at OLIVIA as she puts out her unfinished cigarette.

FRIDA

Sit down.

OLIVIA sits down. FRIDA reaches over and takes OLIVIA'S hands in hers.

FRIDA

First, this. From the center of my soul, I am sorry. I should have warned someone, everyone. I should have said something. I guess more than anything my adult pride overshadowed my childhood rage. I've lived with it for so long I saw it as an invasion of my privacy.

OLIVIA

Free, I--

FRIDA

You ever heard a of a game called "What If"?

OLIVIA shakes her head.

FRIDA

Sure, ya have, only you might call it star gazin' or day dreamin'. Especially when you used to smoke. Remember those days?

OLIVIA slowly nods.

FRIDA

I still play that game, 'Liv. I play it when I have to bribe myself to get outta bed in the morning. I play it when I remember where I went wrong with Mason. I play it like a movie in my head with a soundtrack and everything. So much so, I can almost make myself believe it. That's what my experience has given birth to. I have more fun inside my head than in real life. That's how I hide it. Behind the "What if my mother's husband never molested me? What if I'd retained the power of deciding to whom I'd give that precious part of me? What if that poor imitation of a human male had just been my dad?

OLIVIA'S hands are now wrapped around FRIDA'S.

OLIVIA

That's why you write.

FRIDA

At least if I get it down on paper, somebody else can have some fun. Even if it's only make believe.

FRIDA takes her hands from OLIVIA and lights cigarettes for the both of them.

FRIDA

Saw that in a Bette Davis movie once.

OLIVIA takes the cigarette.

OLIVIA
"Now, Voyager".

FRIDA
You saw that?

OLIVIA
Bette Davis is my favorite old time actress.
Dio mio! Can'tcha do or say anything that has
nothin' to do with movies?

FRIDA
I could, but then I wouldn't be me and what
fun would that be?

OLIVIA
You made peace with it?

FRIDA
Let's call it an uneasy truce. I don't poke it with
a stick and it doesn't rise up and eat me
whole. And we're gonna make sure that you
don't make Maggie's mistakes so you can be
there for Lizzy.

OLIVIA
OK, now you lost me.

FRIDA smiles and takes a pull from her cigarette.

FRIDA
Maggie never came ta terms with the part she
played, which was nothing. She thinks that's
why we don't get along now. We don't get
along now 'cause she doesn't like me and
won't accept who I am. Back then I ended up
hating her longer than I needed to instead of
just letting it go.

OLIVIA
But chu still don't like your moms.

FRIDA
True, but I don't hate her. I can love her and be
there for her when I can. I couldn't do that if I
hated her.

(MORE)

FRIDA (cont'd)

You, my dear, can learn from that by dealin' with your guilt and other inner crap right now. Don't let Lizzy carry this by herself. Don't let her think that any of it is her fault. And for crissake, don't think that any of this is about you. You go down that road and that's it. She's on her own. Lizzy's feeling things that she isn't emotionally ready for. She needs you to be her parent now, not her friend.

OLIVIA gets up and makes a plate for herself and FRIDA. FRIDA watches her.

FRIDA

Where is Lizzy?

OLIVIA

At Alicia's.

FRIDA

Good. Let's eat up, chica. We're gonna need it.

OLIVIA nods absently as tears stream down her face. FRIDA starts eating. OLIVIA turns and begins to clean up the dishes.

FRIDA

Girl, if you don't sit down -- don't make me make you.

OLIVIA sits and begins to eat.

FRIDA

Ya see? Things, life, the world as we know it would be at peace and in harmony if people just do what I tell 'em to.

INT. HOSPITAL -DAY

MANNY is sitting next to MITCHELL holding his hand. There are tubes attached to machines that are breathing and beeping. MAGGIE is sitting in a chair in the corner, reading. BRIAN is asleep in another chair near the door. The door opens and a doctor, DR. CRITTENDEN and a nurse, NANCY ASH enter. BRIAN jumps up.

BRIAN

Code 9 in the mess hall!

MAGGIE

Brian!

NURSE ASH giggles and DR. CRITTENDEN clears his throat.

MANNY

Doctor Crittenden?

DR CRITTENDEN

Mr. Juarez, your father has suffered a massive stroke.

MANNY

Oh God!

MAGGIE walks over to MANNY and puts her hand on his shoulder. MANNY shrugs off her hand.

MANNY

What do we do now?

DR. CRITTENDEN and NURSE ASH look at each other.

MANNY

Jesus.

MAGGIE

Are you telling us that Mitchell is dying?

MANNY

You'd like that wouldn't you, Mom?

DR CRITTENDEN

Mrs. Juarez, your husband-

MANNY

Ex-husband.

NURSE ASH

Mr. Juarez, have you eaten?

Everyone looks at NURSE ASH who walks over to MANNY.

NURSE ASH

I'm Nurse Ash. You have to keep up your strength.

NURSE ASH holds out her hand.

DR CRITTENDEN

That's an excellent idea, Mr. Juarez. I think you should get something to eat.

DR. CRITTENDEN nods at NURSE ASH who takes MANNY'S hand.

MANNY

Try ta listen. Try ta stop thinkin' 'bout yourself for a li'l while, Ma. I know you could really care less but he is my father and I'd like ta know everything Dr. Crittenden tells you. Not just Maggie's Condensed Version. Can ya handle that?

BRIAN

(standing up)

Hey! Manny! How about you give your moms a break?!

MANNY

Hey! Brian! How 'bout ya see to yo' sister! Yeah, I know 'bout that. I'm smarter than da average bear.

BRIAN slumps back down in his chair. NURSE ASH pulls MANNY out of the room. MAGGIE sits in MANNY'S chair and straightens her shirt.

MAGGIE

You were saying, doctor?

BRIAN'S cell phone starts to vibrate. BRIAN takes it out of his pocket and looks at DR. CRITTENDEN.

DR CRITTENDEN

Two doors down on your left.

BRIAN bolts out of the room and DR. CRITTENDEN and MAGGIE smile at each other, awkwardly.

INT. WAITING ROOM -DAY

BRIAN flips open his cell phone on the last ring.

BRIAN

Yeah...Si, Mami, con permiso...si, donde es Jenny? OK, bueno, bueno...eh? No, muy mal...Que? Y Olivia...Si, si Mami, yo vengo ahora. Si, Senhora.

BRIAN flips the phone closed.

BRIAN

I need some cigarettes.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY -DAY

BRIAN is getting ready to put his key in a door, when he has to jump back because someone on the other side is opening it.

GIRL (O.S.)

Si, Mami! God, why can'tcha chill?!

NICCI (O.S.)

(giggling)

Why can'tcha chill?

BRIAN yanks the door open, almost making his younger sister, JENNY, stumble.

NICCI

Tio Brian!

BRIAN picks NICCI up.

BRIAN

You not s'ppose ta say everything ya hear, got me?

NICCI makes a face like he's about to cry.

BRIAN

Don't try dat crap on me. I ain'tcha Moms.

BRIAN looks at JENNY up and down as he puts NICCI down.

BRIAN

So, wha' kinda freak is dis one?

JENNY
(whispers)
Fuck you, Tio Brian.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Porque mi puerto estan abierto? Did I raise
farm animal or human children?!

JENNY
(shouting)
Dios te vendigo, Senhora!

JENNY grabs NICCI'S hand and drags him down the hall.

NICCI
Ow! Titi, I'm tellin' Papa!

BRIAN shakes his head as he goes into his mother, ALICIA'S apartment.

INT. KITCHEN -DAY

BRIAN is sitting in his mother, ALICIA'S kitchen. ALICIA is making him a heaping plate of food.

BRIAN
Mami, why you let Jenny talk ta you like dat? If
I'da even fix my mouth ta say sumptin' like dat,
I be rubbin' da back o' my head by now!
¡Usted permite que ella obtenga lejos con
todo!

ALICIA
Te calle. You and your sister wore me out. Soy
agradecido que ella me llama y me dice
donde ella va y si ella es atrasada. That's
more than I could get you two to do!

ALICIA puts the plate, a knife and a fork in front of BRIAN on the table.

BRIAN
Mami, please sit. I ain't hungry. 'Sides, if I eat
all dis, I be knocked out!

ALICIA
Everyday I hear "I'm not hungry" and everyday I
am buying more food than the day before.

ALICIA stands there with her hands on her hips.

BRIAN
Gracias, senhora.

ALICIA sniffs.

ALICIA
Cerveza, mijo?

BRIAN has been shovelling food into his mouth.

BRIAN
Thee, Mami.

ALICIA
Es muerto y cocinado, mijo. It won't run off
your plate!

BRIAN
Eh?

ALICIA places a beer in front of BRIAN.

ALICIA
Eh?

ALICIA sits down across from BRIAN and he sits back, eyes wide.

ALICIA
Y que? You act you never see me sit.

BRIAN
Nunca.

ALICIA
No big deal. I sit all the time. Usted nunca
debe aquí verlo. Listen, Mijo--

BRIAN grabs the beer and drains it. He then gets up and goes to the refrigerator to get another one.

ALICIA
Brian, es la familia. La familia ayuda la familia
no asunto qué. Sin su familia --

BRIAN
Yo' nothin'. Si, Mami. I know.

ALICIA
¡Usted no sabe nada! Todo usted sabe es su trabajo y sus animales. Mientras usted juega con su circo y sus monstruos de circo --

BRIAN chokes on his food.

ALICIA
You think I don't know the women that you go in and then they go out?

BRIAN
Mami!

ALICIA
Mami, nothing. The important thing is your family needs you. Lizzy needs you. She asked for you.

BRIAN
¿Mí? Mami, Lizzy ain't ask fo' me since she was un bebe. Ella me dice que yo es on old man.

ALICIA hits BRIAN in the back of the head.

ALICIA
No talking like that to you mother. Respect! So, when you finish eating you go. See what your niece wants.

BRIAN
Si, Senhora.

ALICIA
Eat! It's getting cold. I don't live to give you hot food all day.

BRIAN
I know, Mami.

ALICIA

¡Sé, Mami! ¡Sí, Señora! Don't think that you agree with me y yo no puedo make you life miserable ¡Ahora, come!

INT. JENNY'S BEDROOM -DAY

A 13-year-old girl, LIZZY, is laying in bed. The blinds are drawn shut and LIZZY'S outline is barely visible with all of the stuffed animals surrounding her on the bed. There are a few on top of LIZZY. LIZZY'S eyes are shut and she is slowly shaking her head and moaning. A few of the stuffed toys fall to the floor. There is a knock at the door and LIZZY jumps up in bed and grabs the toys and the blanket around her.

BRIAN (O.S.)

Lizzy, ya sleep?

LIZZY smiles broadly.

LIZZY

Tio Brian! No, come in!

The door opens and BRIAN enters. LIZZY opens her arms to hug BRIAN and the blanket falls away. BRIAN turns away because LIZZY is nude.

LIZZY

What's the matter, Tio?

BRIAN

Lizzy! Put somethin' on!

LIZZY sucks her teeth and grabs a large, over-sized t-shirt and pulls it over her head. LIZZY gets out of bed and grabs BRIAN'S hand.

LIZZY

It's OK, Tio. See? I'm all covered up.

BRIAN snatches his hand away.

LIZZY

(giggling)

You remind me of me.

BRIAN

Whatcha mean?

LIZZY

The first time Papi Mitchell show me how much he love me. I was so scared! But then he was so gentle and he jus' keep sayin' over and over, again, "It's ok, Lizzy, 'cause we love each other".

LIZZY falls to her knees in front of BRIAN and lays her head on his knee.

LIZZY

See, Tio Brian? It's ok 'cause we love each otha.

LIZZY reaches for BRIAN'S belt.

LIZZY

This how men and women, in some families show their love for each other. That's wha Papi Mitchell say.

BRIAN jumps up and pushes LIZZY back.

BRIAN

Mitchell ain't yo' papi an' dis ain't how man and women, in some families show dere love!

LIZZY is cowering on the floor.

LIZZY

You di'n't even give me a chance ta show ya! I know how ta make ya feel better 'bout this. But ya won't be still How can I do it, if you won't be still. You don't love me!

BRIAN is horrified. He takes a deep breath and gets on his knees beside LIZZY and strokes her head.

BRIAN

Lizzy-girl, I love ya. Ya know I do! I'm yo' Tio! 'Member, me? Da silly one? Da one who made ja laugh all da time?

LIZZY jumps up and wraps her arms around BRIAN'S neck.

LIZZY

I knew it! Now we can make each otha feel it!

BRIAN sinks back onto his feet. LIZZY is confused and just stares at him.

LIZZY
What's wrong, Tio?

BRIAN
Da li'l girl I use ta make laugh ain't here
anymo'.

LIZZY
I'm right here, tio! Right here!

BRIAN
Yeah, Lizzy you right here. But da li'l girl who I
use ta tickle and who use ta hide my badge
and who use ta giggle every time she saw a
butterfly. Dat li'l girl's gone.

LIZZY brings her knees up to her chin and starts rocking back and forth. BRIAN turns his head and starts to cry.

INT. MAIL DISTRIBUTION CENTER -DAY

ARCHIE MOORE is pulling boxes from a conveyor belt and placing them on various colored shelves. ARCHIE'S partner, DARRYL CARNEGIE, is feeding the belt.

ARCHIE
So?

DARRYL
So, what?

ARCHIE
Didja talk to yo' girl las' night?

DARRYL doesn't speak.

ARCHIE
Yeah, like I thought.

DARRYL
Man, I can't help it. I don't know why but I can't
just walk away! She's-- she's--

ARCHIE
She's ain't good for ya man.

DARRYL
Yeah, like you would know what is or ain't
good enough for you if you saw her.

ARCHIE'S cell phone begins to light up.

DARRYL
Like I said.

ARCHIE holds up his middle finger.

ARCHIE
Hey, baby...you gonna have to speak up, Free,
I'm at work.

ARCHIE motions to DARRYL to take five. DARRYL nods, turns to the worker next to him and gives him a nod. That worker turns to his partner, who is a pregnant woman and nods.

FEMALE WORKER
Boss! Need a nature break!

A man in a shirt and tie yells something unintelligible down the belt and a whistle blows and the belt comes to a halt.

ARCHIE
I'm on my way.

ARCHIE snaps the phone closed.

DARRYL
'Zup?

ARCHIE pulls off his apron.

ARCHIE
Gotta go man. Free needs me.

DARRYL
(smiling)
An' you jus' leavin' the j-o-b? Mmm. Maybe ya
do know.

ARCHIE
(laughs)
Fuck you, Cuz. One.

DARRYL
Love.

ARCHIE goes over to the supervisor, RON.

ARCHIE
Ron, I gotta go. Family emergency.

RON
Man....!

ARCHIE
Ya know me, Ron. I'm goin' whether ya say so
or not. It's my family.

RON looks at ARCHIE for a moment and nods him off.

ARCHIE
You're a prince among men, Ron. Don't let
anybody tell ya different!

RON
Yeah, Archie, I'm all that.

ARCHIE stops and turns.

ARCHIE
Now how many times I gotta tell ya, Ron. Stop
tryin' ta be hip. It don't suit you.

ARCHIE gives RON the peace sign and runs off.

INT. HOSPITAL -DAY

FRIDA is standing outside of MITCHELL'S room, her back to the window. FRIDA stands for a moment with her eyes closed and her cell phone pressed against her lips. FRIDA takes a deep breath, puts her cell phone in her pocket, opens her eyes and then exhales. FRIDA turns and walks over to the doorway and stops. MAGGIE is alone and asleep in the chair next to MITCHELL'S empty bed. FRIDA leans against the footboard of the bed and looks at MAGGIE. MAGGIE stirs when an alarm goes off down the hall. MAGGIE jumps when she realizes FRIDA is in the room.

FRIDA

He dead yet?

MAGGIE

Frida! I taught you better than that.

FRIDA

(laughs)

Yeah, Mom, but he taught me worse. Mom, I gotta tell you somethin'.

MAGGIE

This is not the time for this.

FRIDA

For what? You don't even know what I'm gonna say.

MAGGIE gets up and straightens out her shirt.

MAGGIE

The doctor says he's in a persistent vegetative state.

FRIDA

Mom, we didn't find him at Olivia's. She called me. She came home from work to find him... he was doing things to Lizzy.

MAGGIE just stands there blinking.

FRIDA

Like when I was little.

MAGGIE keeps staring at FRIDA. Then she takes a deep breath and walks over to the window and looks out.

MAGGIE

I'm trying to tell you what's going on, Frida. You asked about his condition.

FRIDA

Actually, I asked if he was dead yet. Not really interested in hearing anything but that. Maggie!!

MAGGIE jumps and spins around.

MAGGIE

What's the matter with you?! I'm trying to tell you what's happening with your--

FRIDA

He's not my anything, Mom. He is a non-person as far as I'm concerned. Did you hear me?

MAGGIE

(shouting)

A non-person! What the hell does that mean?! You'd wish him dead?! Forget your petty BS for a minute and think of your brother! You'd wish something like that on him with everything he's dealing with?!

MANNY runs into the room.

MANNY

What the hell is wrong wit' the two o' you?! This is a fuckin' hospital for chrissake! The las' place my father will probably breathe his las' fuckin' breath and da two of you can't be in the same room without trying to prove each other wrong! Fuck!

A nurse passes and clears her throat loudly.

FRIDA

You might as well hear this, too.

MANNY

Hear what?

FRIDA

Olivia found your father--

MAGGIE

You're right, Frida. I am tired and my back and shoulder is killing me.

MAGGIE snatches her coat out of FRIDA'S hand and storms out of the room.
FRIDA laughs quietly and begins to leave.

MANNY

I know Olivia found Pop. I mean, shit he collapsed on 'er!

FRIDA

Right action, wrong female.

MANNY

Free, ya got somethin' ta say--

FRIDA

Your father collapsed while tryin' ta fuck Lizzy.

FRIDA turns and leaves. MANNY falls into the chair. Two nurses bring MITCHELL back into the room and but him back in bed. MANNY watches as they check MITCHELL'S vitals and make some notes on his chart. Then the nurses smile at MANNY and leave. MANNY sits and stares at MITCHELL, tears falling down MANNY'S face.

INT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE -DAY

FRIDA walks out of the hospital and lights a cigarette. FRIDA sees MAGGIE standing next to FRIDA'S car and pulls out her remote and presses a button. FRIDA takes two long pulls, exhaling large clouds of smoke. FRIDA'S cell phone rings.

FRIDA

Hey, baby, where are you...OK, i'm going to drop Maggie off at her house and I'll see you soon...te amo tambien.

FRIDA smiles as she snaps the phone close and takes another pull before flicking her cigarette. FRIDA walks toward her car.

INT. LITTLE FRIDA'S BEDROOM -1971 -DAY

A young FRIDA is lying at the foot of her bed with her head hanging off the edge. FRIDA watches MAGGIE rushing around the room, picking up clothes off the floor.

MAGGIE

Remember what I said, little girl. You are not to spend the entire day watching television. Your teacher sent you the homework schedule for the next three weeks.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (cont'd)

You have plenty to do. I shouldn't even be picking up after you. You're old enough to do it yourself.

MITCHELL comes into the room and winks at FRIDA.

MITCHELL

You're gonna be late, Mags.

MITCHELL grabs the clothes out of MAGGIE'S hands and begins to usher her out of the room.

MITCHELL

You're so right about Frida being too old for you to be picking up after her. I'll make sure she gets started before I take my nap. Now git!

MITCHELL and MAGGIE leave. FRIDA sits up and makes her bed. FRIDA grabs a videotape from her underneath her bed and puts it in her VCR. FRIDA gets the remote off the top of the television and pushes a button. Music is playing and moaning can be heard.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY -DAY

MITCHELL locks the door and then picks up a deck of cards off a small side table. MITCHELL turns and faces FRIDA'S doorway and smiles because he can hear the moaning coming from FRIDA'S room. MITCHELL walks into FRIDA'S room and begins to close the door.

MITCHELL

Nah, my angel. I have somethin' new to teach ya. Ever heard of strip poker? It's a card game.

FRIDA (O.S.)

(clapping)

Oooooo!

EXT. FRONT OF MAGGIE'S HOUSE -PRESENT -DAY

MAGGIE gets out of FRIDA'S car and slams the door. FRIDA quickly gets out of the car and runs after MAGGIE.

MAGGIE

Get away from me with your lies! That's all you've ever done is lie! All your life built on nothing but lies!

INT. MAGGIE'S FOYER -DAY

MAGGIE throws her coat to the floor. FRIDA follows after her walking over it.

FRIDA

Is this the same woman who complains that I don't spend enough time with her? Why would you want to spend time with someone you don't like or trust? I am telling you what's going on. Isn't that another complaint? You never know what's happening? Bet you're sorry you wished for that. Besides, I don't have to lie anymore, Mom. The cat's outta the bag.

MAGGIE

Who else have you told these lies to? Brian? Alicia? My God, they must think I'm the biggest fool.

FRIDA

(laughing)

Mom, when are you going to get it through your head that none of this is about you? Never has been. All you have ever worried about is how you'll be looked at once you knew what was going on. Your participation in this ended once you gave control of me to Mitchell.

MAGGIE stops in her tracks. FRIDA goes over to MAGGIE and she spins and slaps FRIDA.

MAGGIE

You once told some people that I was dead. I wish I'd never had you. You have been nothing but a disappointment to me.

FRIDA smiles while tears fill her eyes.

FRIDA

Too bad the only time you'll pay any attention to me or talk to me is when you're voicing your disappointment. Mom, I do love you. Never stopped. I just stopped liking you a long time ago.

FRIDA leaves. MAGGIE slumps onto her couch and sobs.

EXT. FRIDA'S APARTMENT BUILDING -DAY

ARCHIE is standing in front of the entrance of FRIDA'S building, watching FRIDA sit in her car. ARCHIE takes his cell phone out of his pocket and dials a number. FRIDA jumps and flips the phone open.

FRIDA

Hey baby.

ARCHIE

Where you?

FRIDA

Just pullin' up now.

ARCHIE

Yeah right. Unless you gonna drive the car up the stairs you might wanna try turnin' off the car, gettin' out, lockin' the doors an' come inside the house. Give it a try?

FRIDA looks around and spots Archie.

FRIDA

You crack you up, don'tcha?

ARCHIE

That's how I can make you smile.

FRIDA gets out of the car and walks over to ARCHIE. ARCHIE puts his hands on either side of FRIDA'S face and kisses her.

ARCHIE

Hey baby.

FRIDA

Hey. How long you been standin' out here?

ARCHIE

Yeah, well I saw you park an' then when you didn't come up, I came down an' watched you stare outta your window at nothin' for a few minutes. Then I started ta get bored, so I called ya!

FRIDA and ARCHIE walk into her building hand in hand.

INT. FRIDA'S LIVINGROOM -DAY

ARCHIE and FRIDA are sitting on the couch and ARCHIE is holding her. Music is playing softly in the background and they are both smoking cigarettes.

ARCHIE

(laughing)

Bette Davis, huh? I'll have ta watch the next Bette Davis Day on my channel.

FRIDA

Archie, tell me about your father.

ARCHIE

What's there ta tell? He was my father, my champion, my best friend. I was my father's son.

FRIDA gets up and turns towards ARCHIE. FRIDA grabs ARCHIE'S face in her hands.

FRIDA

No, really. Archie. I need to see your father through your eyes. I need you to make me feel the way you feel when you remember him. Think about the joy you share with me when you tell me 'bout your day with Janelle, or something she did or said that tickled you. I need to feel something like that now.

ARCHIE looks at FRIDA for a moment.

ARCHIE

And what's wrong with hearin' 'bout Janelle, all of a sudden?

FRIDA

Archie, please.

ARCHIE pulls FRIDA back down to where she was and holds her.

ARCHIE

OK, well, I was the oldest boy, being my father's first son, I was his pride and joy. Everywhere he went, he took me with him. I remember going to work with my father. He was a machinist specialist with GM in Tarrytown. Everywhere he went, I went. Used to go hang out with him and his friends. I remember going with him to see a friend of his in Long Island. Can't remember the man's name. That was the first time my father gave me some beer. Working in Tarrytown and living in Brooklyn made it a big distance gettin' back and forth. He would come home, take a shower and sit in his chair in the livingroom. That was his daily routine, you know. On the weekends, we'd go out and hang out with his friends. He would always talk to me about what was going on. Always explain to me what was right and what was wrong. I started hanging around with my father when I was 3 or 4. I once set a rug on fire at his friend's house. Didn't get a beating, but got the lecture of a lifetime from my father and his friend. Took me to work. Everything that he didn't do in the house, I was with him.

ARCHIE stops and looks at FRIDA.

ARCHIE

How does that help ya, Free. I know you. When ya ask for somethin' there's always a reason, even if I can't figure it out.

FRIDA

What're you trying to say, Archie? That I'm calculating? Is that what you think of me?

ARCHIE

No. I'm sayin' that you think alot and you don't tell me everything you're thinkin'.

(MORE)

ARCHIE (cont'd)

I'm sayin' I know there's a reason you askin' me 'bout this other than curiosity. Don't try and start a fight with me. You're battlin' too many demons already.

FRIDA lights another cigarette and goes over to the window.

FRIDA

Do you remember the time before he died?

ARCHIE

My dad died when I was six. When he died, I took it real personal. And for some reason it was suggested that I be shipped to one of my uncles' house. 'Cause I was so close with my father, they figured I needed a man in my life. That's when all the insanity and rebellion began. I was first shipped to my Uncle Glover. All because my Uncle Glover said to me, "I am now your father. You better listen to every word I say." I've come to understand now that I was experiencing a lot of feelings that I couldn't talk about with these so called men in my life. My dad was my idol. My dad was my hero.

FRIDA

I need to hear about dads like that. I need to hear it as much and as often as possible. It's the only thing that keeps Good Frida alive. I especially need it now.

ARCHIE

Now that the man responsible for makin' Good Frida sick in the first place is lyin' in a hospital bed near death?

FRIDA turns to face ARCHIE.

FRIDA

Near death?

ARCHIE

I spoke to Manny while I was waitin' for you ta remember how ta get outta your car. He tol' me that Mitchell's in a coma. It don't look good.

FRIDA

What else did he tell you?

ARCHIE

Yeah, he tol' me that, too.

FRIDA

He's not near death enough. Him and death need ta become alot closer. And if there's anything I can do to make that happen, well I'm all for it.

The look on FRIDA'S face is mirrored in the surprise on ARCHIE'S face. FRIDA slumps in the chair next to her.

FRIDA

You see what I mean now? Bad Frida. That part of me that's laughing, hell, joyous at the prospect of sending that man to stand before his maker. Bad Frida is way too close for comfort.

ARCHIE

Come 'ere. You too far away for comfort.

FRIDA gets on her hands and knees and crawls to ARCHIE. ARCHIE gets on the floor and meets her. ARCHIE holds out his arms but FRIDA stops.

FRIDA

Archie I can't lose that part of me that people are drawn to and come to love. The darkness that is so much a part of me and that fuels part of my imagination, is threatening to kill Good Frida. I can't let that happen.

ARCHIE

Then we won't let it happen.

FRIDA

Just that simple, huh?

ARCHIE

Always is. We're the ones that make it complicated.

FRIDA

For you maybe.

ARCHIE grabs FRIDA and hugs her tightly.

INT. STAIRCASE FRIDA'S HOUSE -EVENING

FRIDA'S son, MASON, is sitting on the staircase, eyes wide with shock. MASON hears FRIDA and ARCHIE headed his way and scrambles into the kitchen. FRIDA reaches the staircase and ARCHIE is behind her.

FRIDA
How long can you stay?

ARCHIE
As long as you need me to.

FRIDA stops in her tracks and ARCHIE bumps into her.

FRIDA
As long as I need you to? Since when?

ARCHIE
Why you gotta ask questions? Why you
always gotta know?

Frida continues up the stairs.

FRIDA
Just keepin' my head where my ass is at. Isn't
that what you say to me? You say you know
who I am. Well, I'm someone who asks
questions sometimes. Why don't you just
answer when I ask? You always say if I got
questions, you got answers, right?

ARCHIE
Because you need me here. Is that alright
with you?

FRIDA
It's more than alright with me, Archie. I just
question why now, all of a sudden. I've
needed you before and you couldn't physically
be here because of your commitment to
Janelle. Something I've never wanted or tried
to interfere with. As a matter of fact, I get angry
with you when I see you slippin' up.

(MORE)

FRIDA (cont'd)

Partly because I know what it's like to not have a dad. But mostly because it's important to me that you be the best dad you can. But that commitment keeps your plate full and I'm jus' wonderin' why all of sudden you can be here?

ARCHIE

You want me ta leave?

INT. FRIDA'S BEDROOM -NIGHT

FRIDA and ARCHIE sit on the edge of her bed after entering the room.

FRIDA

No. I want an answer, Archie. For some strange reason I feel the need to jus' lay things out where I can see 'em. You know what I mean? If that means that you'll leave, well, I can't honestly say that I'd be alright with that. But, there's really nothin' I can do 'bout it. I mean, it's not like you haven't promised to do that from the beginning.

ARCHIE is silent. He then gets up and starts looking for something.

FRIDA

I can be as quiet as you want, for as long as you want. I'm in a moment of "need to know" and I apologize if it's not where you're at right now. But I'm not sorry for what I'm feeling and we really need to settle this, once and for all.

ARCHIE spies what he's looking for on FRIDA'S dresser. He picks up a remote and sits back on the bed.

ARCHIE

Can'tcha jus' give "The Committee" a rest 'n let's jus' enjoy each other for this moment. Stop worryin' so much 'bout the next one.

FRIDA

I could but I don't want to. Living in the moment is good most of the time. But not when living in the moment means being stuck there.

FRIDA snatches the remote from ARCHIE.

FRIDA
Let's not run away ta TV-land.

ARCHIE looks at FRIDA and grunts. He turns and faces FRIDA.

ARCHIE
Well?

FRIDA
What are we doin', Archie. We're great together. Do you agree?

ARCHIE
Free, listen. I know ya wanna know where this is going--

FRIDA
At this point, Archie? I'd settle for knowing what this is.

ARCHIE
Why do we hafta put a name to what we have.

FRIDA
'Cause it would help me ta deal with things.

ARCHIE
Things?

FRIDA
Ok. It would help me to know where I stand. "More than friends" jus' isn't workin' out for me.

ARCHIE
This is really causin' ya some discomfort, isn't it?

FRIDA
Don't go there, Archie. You want to remove yourself from this thing which has no name, You remove yourself. Go ahead and run away from it instead of talkin' about it! Resolving it.

ARCHIE

You got da right to feel this way an' ta talk
'bout it. True 'nough. I have the right to choose
whether or not to participate in the
conversation. I'm gonna go see my baby.

FRIDA

Give her my love. Peace and blessings.

FRIDA doesn't look at ARCHIE as he rises to leave. He bends to kiss FRIDA.
She gets up quickly.

FRIDA

Love ya lots!

FRIDA goes into her bathroom. ARCHIE goes over to the bedroom door and
closes it. He then starts to take off his clothes.

INT. POLICE STATION -NIGHT

There is a large desk that takes up half the room and sits high above the floor.
There are six benches, three on either side of the room. On the right there are
four men shackled together and also to the bench, which is welded to the floor.
On the left there is a woman, LILA, handcuffed to a bench. LILA is very thin, her
face is drawn and pale and her clothes smudged here and there with dirt.
There is a female officer, OFFICER PERCY standing next to LILA.

Two male, uniformed officers are standing behind the desk. One, SGT. LEWIS
is talking to a plain-clothes detective standing in front of the desk. The other
officer, DIEGO RIVERA is working on the computer. OLIVIA enters through a
door next to DIEGO, still strapping on her gun belt.

DIEGO

(shaking his head)

I go on vacation and the world falls apart.

OLIVIA

What're you talkin' about?

DIEGO

We been workin' the desk togetha fo' eight
years an' this the first time you ever been late.
I guess it's payback for leavin' you an' goin'
on vacation.

OLIVIA

Yeah, that's gotta be it Rivera. Ya know my life depends on you so much.

DIEGO

Ill! What's up yo' ass?

OLIVIA

Not you thank God.

SGT. LEWIS finishes with the detective and spies OLIVIA.

SGT. LEWIS

Glad you could join us, Sgt. Baez. I was beginning to think I'd need to put out a APB on you or something.

OLIVIA

Sorry, Sarge. Jus' some things I had ta deal wit' at home.

SGT. LEWIS

And now you're here, mind and body. Right?

OLIVIA nods and notices LILA.

SGT. LEWIS

As you, can see, Baez, Lila's on time for her monthly appointment with you. You could be more considerate and be on time when she comes. Well, I'm outta here. See ya when I see ya!

SGT. LEWIS goes through the door that OLIVIA came through. DIEGO comes over to OLIVIA.

DIEGO

So, was he worth it?

OLIVIA

Was who worth what?

DIEGO

Whoever it was dat made ya late for yo' shift.

OLIVIA

Officer, how 'bout we pretend to do the cops 'n robbers thing, huh?

DIEGO

Listen, jus' 'cause he was a two-minute brotha, don't mean ya have to--

OLIVIA shoots him a look. DIEGO holds up his hands and hunches his shoulders. OLIVIA turns back, closes her eyes and breathes deeply for a moment.

OLIVIA

Ok, Lila. What's goin' on with you, now?

OFFICER PERCY who is standing next to LILA comes over to the desk.

OFFICER PERCY

Hey, Sarge. Lila was found in Elizabeth panhandling on North Ave. The two-five called it in--

OLIVIA

How long you been in this house, Officer?

OFFICER PERCY

This is my third month, Sarge.

OLIVIA

Well, our house is jus' like a bar. We get our regulars, too.

OFFICER PERCY

I understand that, Sarge, but--

OLIVIA

And Lila here is one of 'em, so we try ta cut 'er some slack.

OFFICER PERCY

Yes, I get that, Sarge, but--

OLIVIA

We jus' take her to Social Services so she can get a shower, a meal and some rest.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (cont'd)

Then the cycle o' life begins again and someone else is blessed enough ta run into her before she gets dead.

OFFICER PERCY

Some things 're worse than dead, Sarge. I caught 'er trying to sell her daughter for her next hit.

DIEGO looks up from the screen. OLIVIA looks at the officer and then over to LILA as if in a daze. There's silence for a few moments as OLIVIA keeps looking back and forth between OFFICER PERCY and LILA.

OLIVIA

Selling her... daughter?

OFFICER PERCY

Yeah, Sarge.

OLIVIA jumps over the desk. DIEGO is out of his seat, his hand on his gun.

DIEGO

Sarge?! What's happenin'?!

OLIVIA runs over to LILA and slaps her. OFFICER PERCY is stunned and DIEGO runs around to the front, next to her. OLIVIA is shaking LILA, who is screaming now.

OLIVIA

Shut up! Shut up! Yo' daughter, bitch?! For yo' next hit?! Then what, stupida?! You hook up wit' some perverted dealer and have more baby girls to sell for yo' high?!

DIEGO is trying to pull OLIVIA away from LILA and OFFICER PERCY is trying to help. OLIVIA pushes the OFFICER PERCY so hard she lands on her butt. OLIVIA pushes DIEGO away and draws her gun.

DIEGO

Sargeant Baez!

OLIVIA

Jus' stay the fuck away from me. Fuckin' men. Fuckin' sperm donors is all you are. Ain't got no heart and no feelin' above your belt.

OLIVIA has LILA by the throat in one hand and is now pointing her gun at DIEGO'S groin. By now the lobby is bedlam.

The prisoners shackled to the bench across the room are yelling and shouting. Other officers and detectives have come to investigate the disturbance and some are begin to sneak up on Olivia, their hands on their guns.

OLIVIA

Sure, all of ya stick togetha when some psycho hose beast flips on one o' ya. You fuckahs can never figure it out until it's too late. Look! Look at what you make us do. Slowly but surely you turn us into this!

OLIVIA is still shaking LILA by the throat. LILA is beginning to pass out. A detective, DET. WILLIAMS closest to OLIVIA slowly bends to put his gun down. OLIVIA turns to look at him.

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

That's right, Sarge. Look at me. See? I'm puttin' my gun down.

LILA has passed out and OLIVIA lets go of her neck. OFFICER PERCY tends to LILA.

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

Sarge? Hey! What's goin' on here? This ain't you, Sarge. Not the Sargeant Baez who takes up collections for the families of those who fell in the line of duty. Not the Sargeant Baez who sets up visiting groups when one of us is in the hospital.

OLIVIA

Detective Williams?

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

You know it.

OLIVIA

How many kids you got?

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

You know I got fo' girls, Sarge. I show you pictures of 'em all the time.

OLIVIA

(nodding)

Mm hmm. Ya like 'em?

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

Uh--

OLIVIA

Dontcha know?

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

I love 'em, Sarge.

OLIVIA

Like ta hold 'em. Play wit' 'em. Stuff like that?

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

'Course, Sarge.

OLIVIA

What else ya like ta do wit' 'em?

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

I don't follow.

OLIVIA takes the safety off of her gun.

OLIVIA

Follow this.

OLIVIA shoots above DET. WILLIAMS' head, then points the gun back at him.

OLIVIA

What else you like to do wit' 'em? Yo' ex took out an RSO on you, right? Why was that? Couldn't keep yo' hands offa the girls?

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

Sarge?

OLIVIA

Is that why yo' ex made sure ya couldn't get within five miles of her 'n the girls? Ta make sure ya didn't put chur filthy hands on her baby girls again?!

OFFICER PERCY is able to sneak up behind OLIVIA and grabs her arm that is holding the gun. DIEGO wrenches the gun away from OLIVIA. LILA is coughing and crying on the bench.

LILA

Wha'-- what the fuck is yo' deal, bitch?! Ya think 'cause you got dat uniform on, ya Queen Bitch for the day? Fuck!

OFFICER PERCY

Just sit down, Lila and let me check you out.

LILA

Don'tcha fuckin' touch me! When my lawya gits hea', we gonna sue the shit outta every fuckin' cop in hea'.

DIEGO is standing and staring at OLIVIA. A man, CHIEF BURTON has been watching the commotion from behind the desk walks over to OLIVIA.

CHIEF BURTON

Get off your ass, Sargeant Baez!

OLIVIA slowly looks up at him and starts to laugh.

DIEGO

Chief? I think I should help her to the locker room. I know her brotha, he's a C.O. over at county. I can call--

CHIEF BURTON spins and glares at DIEGO

SUITED MAN

Officer Rivera. Do I look like I give two shits who you know? Get her out of here. She doesn't step a foot in here without her union rep. You understand that Sargeant Baez?

OLIVIA is on her feet and still laughing.

OLIVIA

Chief?

CHIEF BURTON

Chose what you say, very carefully, Sargeant.

OLIVIA

You should really loose some weight 'fore the M.E. Is called in ta pull ya off 'o your wife.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (cont'd)

I mean Jesus, you gotta know she be fakin' it, right? No woman, not even Lila over there, could git wet, let alone git off wit' you!

DIEGO and the female officer pull a laughing Olivia away. DET. WILLIAMS walks over and stands next to CHIEF BURTON.

CHIEF BURTON

Did I hear her correctly?

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

'Fraid so, Chief. But don't take it personal. She's on some anti-man thing. You know how it is wit' 'em. It'll blow ovah soon as her man wraps his arms 'round 'er.

CHIEF BURTON

Poor bastard.

INT. MITCHELL'S HOSPITAL ROOM -NIGHT

MANNY is watching television sitting in a chair next to the bed. NURSE ASH comes in and MANNY looks at her and smiles.

NURSE ASH

You should do that more often.

MANNY

Don't usually have a reason ta smile.

NURSE ASH

That's sad. You ever seen a sunset?

MANNY

Uh, sure. Why?

NURSE ASH

That always puts a smile on my face. Imagine. If those bleeding hearts in the EPA had their way it wouldn't be so pretty. It's the pollution that makes 'em that way.

MANNY laughs and shakes his head.

NURSE ASH

It's true!

MANNY

You see the beauty and the truth of things,
dontcha?

NURSE ASH

(nodding)

And knowing the truth of something doesn't
take away from the beauty of it.

MANNY looks at NURSE ASH for a moment and then back at the television.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

...Three have been reported dead and twelve
wounded in the fourth bombing in as many
days in this war-torn land. Peace talks have
stalled and there doesn't seem to be an end
to the violence in sight.

NURSE ASH stands next to MANNY.

NURSE ASH

See? They live in fear of death and look, see
there?

MANNY

Where?

NURSE ASH

Just over the reporter's left shoulder. There's
a little girl playing with a doll. Mortars and all
kinds of loud explosions happening all
around her and, look at her.

MANNY

Yeah?

NURSE ASH

Her childhood is still in tact. She's a very lucky
little girl.

MANNY looks up at NURSE ASH.

MANNY

My sister would be stickin' her finger down her
throat right 'bout now.

NURSE ASH shrugs and smiles.

NURSE ASH
 Maybe you don't smile much anymore
 because you don't want to.

NURSE ASH leaves the room. MANNY sits in the chair next to MITCHELL'S bed.

MANNY
 Too ol' for ya, huh, Pop?

INT. ALICIA'S LIVINGROOM -NIGHT

BRIAN is sitting on the couch staring into space. ALICIA is standing in the doorway, arms folded, looking at BRIAN.

ALICIA
 Mijito?

BRIAN doesn't answer.

ALICIA
 Brian Benjamin Baez!!

BRIAN looks slowly over to where ALICIA is standing, but doesn't see her. ALICIA goes over to BRIAN and sits on the coffee table in front of him. ALICIA grabs BRIAN'S hand.

ALICIA
 Mijito, it can't be that bad.

BRIAN
 Mami, it's bad. Worse 'n bad. My ten-year-ol' niece, yo' gran'daughter, jus' came on ta me, Mami! Yo' gran'daughter jus' tol' me she wanna have sex wit' me so she could show me how much she love me!

ALICIA gets up and starts toward the kitchen but BRIAN goes after ALICIA, grabs her by the shoulders and spins her around.

BRIAN
 Oh, no, Mami! You-- We gotta face this. Ain't no hidin' in da kitchen.

BRIAN'S cell phone rings.

ALICIA

What hiding? I just want to give you some privacy.

BRIAN

(rolling eyes)

Hello?... Hey, Diego. Listen I can't talk-- ...
What?! Jesus Christ! ... Yeah man, yeah, yeah
I'm on my way.

BRIAN flips his phone closed.

BRIAN

Listen, Mami. That li'l girl in dere is fucked up,
con permiso, pero I can't deal wit' dat. Ya
can't go hide in yo' kitchen, Mami. Ya can't go
hide in ya room wit' yo' saints and candles.

BRIAN grabs his jacket and opens the door to leave.

ALICIA

¡Usted no me puede salir aquí con esto sólo!

BRIAN

Mami, I gotta go an' you gotta han'le this, fo'
now. Nobody else can. 'Livia jus' got 'erself in
some big shit, con permiso, an' I gotta go get
'er 'fo she kill somebody.

BRIAN leaves. ALICIA turns toward JENNY'S room and stares at the closed door for a moment. ALICIA then goes over to a door opposite LIZZY'S and opens it. ALICIA walks into her room and kneels before a make-shift altar with plaster statues and candles. ALICIA lights a few candles and pours some water in her hands and splashes it on her face. ALICIA begins to pray.

INT. FRIDA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

FRIDA is lying in bed, smoking a cigarette watching ARCHIE sleep. ARCHIE starts snoring and FRIDA smiles and gets up to go to the bathroom. As FRIDA closes the door she pauses and stares at her bed.

INT. MAGGIE AND MITCHELL'S BEDROOM -1972 -DAY

MAGGIE pauses at the top of the stairs. Cries can be heard coming through the door to MAGGIE'S right. MAGGIE opens the door and sees MITCHELL standing over a eight-year-old FRIDA. FRIDA is naked, lying face down and crying. FRIDA looks up at MAGGIE.

FRIDA

Mommy? I'm sorry, Mommy! Please make him stop!

MITCHELL

She don't care about sorry, do you Mags? We know you need to be punished, my fallen angel.

MAGGIE stands at the doorway for a moment and then closes the door.

FRIDA (O.S.)

Mommy!!

INT. 1975 - FRIDA'S BEDROOM -NIGHT

FRIDA is lying in her bed with MANNY, age 4, asleep next to her. FRIDA is lying on her side watching a small black and white television which is on a chair next to her bed. A shadow falls across FRIDA and she tenses up. MITCHELL walks into the room and sits on the edge of FRIDA'S bed.

MITCHELL

(whispering)

Watchin' somethin' good?

Frida nods.

MITCHELL

I thought we'd watch one of our special movies. How 'bout it?

FRIDA

Manny's asleep. He'll wake up and if I'm not here--

MITCHELL

He'll be jus' fine, my angel. Come on. Let's go watch the movie.

FRIDA doesn't answer and Mitchell grabs FRIDA'S hand. MANNY stirs as MITCHELL yanks FRIDA out of the bed.

MITCHELL

I like it when you play 'bad girl', my angel. That better be whatchur doin'. If I thought for one minute you were fightin' me for real, I don't know what I'd do.

MITCHELL pushes FRIDA gently through the doorway.

INT. KITCHEN -NIGHT

FRIDA and MITCHELL walk toward the bedroom he shares with MAGGIE. Suddenly, FRIDA snatches her hand from MITCHELL and runs out of the house.

EXT. STREET -NIGHT

FRIDA runs around the corner from her house and onto the porch of another house. FRIDA rings the bell and bangs on the door. The porch light comes on and FRIDA'S best friend's mother, TERESA opens the door.

TERESA

Frida?

FRIDA

Hi, Mrs. Keating. I know it's late, but can I sleep here, tonight?

TERESA steps back to let FRIDA enter.

INT. KEATING KICTHEN -NIGHT

KK, FRIDA'S friend, KK's brother, BART and FRIDA are sitting around the table. FRIDA is staring at her hands and BART and KK exchange awkward glances.

TERESA (O.S.)

Sure, MAGGIE...yeah, I know...uh huh...uh huh...it's no problem, no problem at all...ok, I'll see you tomorrow.

FRIDA looks up as TERESA enters the room.

FRIDA
Is my mom coming?

TERESA
She'll be here tomorrow, so you get to spend
the night. How would that be?

FRIDA smiles slightly and nods.

TERESA
KK, you and Frida go to your room and I'll
bring you two some hot chocolate.

KK
Extra marshmallows?

TERESA
And whipped cream, too!

KK takes FRIDA'S hand and leads her out of the kitchen.

BART
Maggie's coming home tomorrow? After what
she's been through?

TERESA
You know what Maggie's like. She always has
ta have control over her family and herself.
Sometimes she can't do both at the same
time and herself wins out in those cases.
'Sides, I haven't turned any soul away in need
and I'm not gonna start now.

BART
Yeah, I know what she's like. Cold as hell. I
can't believe this!

TERESA
Shhh! Frida will hear you!

BART grabs his jacket off of a hook near the door.

TERESA
Where are you going?

BART

I don't know, Ma. I jus' can't be in here. Too close.

THERESA

Sit down and stop actin' like some kinda zoo animal, Bartholomew.

BART

Ma--

TERESA shoots him a look and like a little boy BART hangs his coat up and sits obediently in a chair.

BART

Whatcha gonna do?

TERESA

We're gonna try an' make that li'l girl laugh 'til she sleeps. Understand?

BART nods.

TERESA

Go help KK. Jus' be yourself, Bart. You gotta friendly, open face and a great sense of humor. Jus' be you.

BART

'K.

TERESA continues preparing the hot chocolate. BART stands indecisively at the door for a moment before going off in the same direction as KK and FRIDA.

INT. KK'S BEDROOM -NIGHT

KK is kneeling in front of a crying FRIDA. BART stands at the doorway and motions to ask if it's alright for him to enter. KK nods and FRIDA turns quickly.

KK

'S ok, Free. It's only Bart. You go on ahead an' cry.

FRIDA slides down the side of the bed and lays her head on KK's shoulder. BART sits on the bed and watches. BART puts his head down and rubs his eyes.

KK
(whispers)
Look at Mr. Tough Guy, girl!

FRIDA turns and looks at BART.

BART
What?

FRIDA and KK look at each other and burst out laughing. BART gives the girls the finger then gets up and flops himself in a chair at the foot of the bed. FRIDA and KK continue laughing. BART and KK wink at each other. TERESA enters the room carrying a tray with four mugs and a plate of cookies.

KK
Yea! Sugar!

TERESA
What's so funny?

BART
Nothin'!

FRIDA and KK giggle. TERESA sits on the bed.

TERESA
Ah, secrets! See, KK? I told you stuff happens all the time.

BART
Yeah, Ma. Freaks me out when you do that. Always did.

FRIDA
What're you talkin' about?

BART
K, you mean ta tell me there's somethin' you didn't tell Frida? I thought you told each other everything. Frida, our Ma's psychic.

KK
Free already thought I was weird when we met and I didn't wanna lose another partner in crime 'cause o' my crazy ma.

FRIDA

Psychic?! Uh huh. Yeah. Right.

KK

See! Now she'll never come over here again.
Thanks, dweebazoid!

TERESA

Don't listen to them, Free. They're silly. I can jus' tell, sometimes when something's gonna happen. Jus' tonight, before we settled in for bed, KK was whining--

KK

I don't whine!

TERESA

'Scuse me... Made an observation that nothin' seems to happen 'round here. I told her that she should be careful what she ask for and that I had a feeling 'bout somethin', 's all. If I was really psychic, this cocoa woulda already been made when you got here, right?

FRIDA nods and she and TERESA look at BART and KK.

BART

Yeah, alright, Ma. Play it off if ya wanna. I know the deal.

TERESA

Now Bartholomew, you and your sister stop teasin' this girl. You know damn well I'm not pyschic. That's all it is, foolishness. You two need to be talking about normal things like the latest Paris scandal or which country will Angie's next child be from! I wish you two were normal, don't you Free?

FRIDA is looking back and forth at everyone while they're talking, with a far away look in her eyes.

FRIDA

Huh?

TERESA

You see, you two knuckleheads have completely confused this girl. Don't worry Free. We can still help them be normal children and act like a normal brother and sister. There's hope that one day we might actually be a normal family. Completely and totally f'd up!

FRIDA is shocked by TERESA'S bluntness. There is a moment of silence and then everyone bursts out laughing. TERESA stands up.

TERESA

OK, no more of this nonsense. Everybody stay where they are and keep doing what they're doing, I mean it! I'm going to bed and I want to be kept awake by the sound of laughter and giggles and people raiding the fridge. Got it?

Bart, KK and Frida nod tears streaming down their faces from laughter.

TERESA

Come again?

Bart and KK jump to attention and salute TERESA. FRIDA is confused as to what to do.

KK

Free!

TERESA stands expectantly. FRIDA scrambles to her feet and stands at attention on the bed.

BART, KK, FRIDA

Ma'am!

TERESA

That's what I thought. Now you, young lady hop and give me twenty jumps on the bed!

FRIDA hesitates and KK motions to urge her to begin. FRIDA starts to hop a little and TERESA jumps on the bed.

TERESA

You call that jumping?

TERESA starts jumping on the bed with FRIDA. KK jumps up on the bed to join them. FRIDA looks at BART expectantly.

TERESA
You kiddin'? Mr. Cool jump on the bed?

BART jumps on the bed and it collapses. Everyone falls to the floor laughing.

INT. FRIDA'S KITCHEN -DAY

MASON is sitting at the table eating breakfast. FRIDA comes in and pours herself a cup of coffee.

FRIDA
Hello, son.

MASON
Hey, Mom.

FRIDA
What's the matter?

MASON
Nothin'.

FRIDA
Please don't make me go through this. You know I'm so not a mornin' person.

FRIDA sits down at the table.

FRIDA
Well?

MASON
Well what?

FRIDA
Mason--

MASON
What's going on with Mitchell?

FRIDA
Well, the doctor said--

MASON

No. I mean what's going on with you and Mitchell? Why do you hate him so much?

FRIDA

What makes you think I hate him?

MASON

I heard you and Archie talkin' last night. Why're you worried that if you keep hatin' him it'll kill the good part of you? What's going on, Mom?

ARCHIE walks into the kitchen.

ARCHIE

Well, Mom?

FRIDA turns and frowns at ARCHIE and he sits at the table.

ARCHIE

Your son asked you a question.

FRIDA rolls her eyes.

FRIDA

You hear something, Mason. Nah, must've been the wind.

MASON

Stop tryin' ta change the subject, Mom.

FRIDA

Mitchell and I had a-- I mean he, well he hurt me a long time ago.

MASON and ARCHIE look at her expectantly. FRIDA sits back in her chair and sighs.

FRIDA

Mitchell sexually abused me when I was six years old.

Everyone is silent. ARCHIE and FRIDA look at MASON expectantly. MASON looks at FRIDA in disbelief for a moment.

MASON

Why isn't he in jail?

FRIDA

I didn't tell anyone back then.

MASON

Does Gramma know? I mean, did she know back then?

FRIDA

No. I didn't tell her until a few year ago.

MASON

And?

FRIDA

And what?

MASON

What the fuck! Mom! What'd she say? Why isn't that bastard in jail?!

FRIDA

Goddamn it, Mason! Your language! Calm down!

MASON

I'm sorry, Mom, but fuck my language and fuck calm down! The man I've known as my grandfather turns out to have molested my mom and you're worried about my language?!

FRIDA bursts out crying. MASON hurries over to FRIDA to console her. FRIDA buries her face in his chest.

MASON

Mom! Mom, I'm sorry! Please stop crying! You never cry! I'll watch my language, I swear!

ARCHIE

Nah, don't stop her. She needs ta let it out, Mace. That's thirty-four years o' grief and unhappiness finally comin' to a head.

FRIDA keeps sobbing and MASON is still holding her. ARCHIE lights a cigarette and goes out the back door. MASON helps FRIDA up and leads her up the stairs.

INT. FRIDA'S BEDROOM -DAY

MASON helps FRIDA into bed, covers her up and gets up to leave.

FRIDA
(sobbing)
No! Don't leave!

MASON sits back down and FRIDA hugs him tightly still crying.

MASON
Why didn't you tell me?

FRIDA
(sniffing)
How could I tell you something like that? I'm your mother. I'm supposed to protect you from that kind o' ugliness.

FRIDA reaches toward a box of tissues and MASON gives her the box. FRIDA blows her nose.

FRIDA
'Sides, you know me, son. Jus' tryin' to keep you young at heart.

MASON
Mom, I know how important childhood is to you. You always tol' me that bein' a child is a gift and I should always remember ta take it out and play wit' it as often as possible. But that means I gotta grow up sometime, don't I? You gotta trus' me an' tell me stuff. Ya don't wanna be like Gramma, do you?

FRIDA
In some ways yeah. In that way, no. But I can't jus' turn off bein' your mom jus' like that. Protectin' you is part o' the package.

MASON

Yeah, Mom but while you're protectin' me
who's protectin' you?

FRIDA looks up at MASON.

MASON

You always get so mad at Manny and
Gramma when they don't tell you shit. Ya
know how crazy I get 'bout it.

FRIDA

What possible good could come from me
telling you? What, so you can carry it around
for me?

MASON

Carry what?

FRIDA

Hatred. Anger. Sadness. I didn't give birth to
you for that. You were my chance, Mace. My
chance to make damn sure that you had a
happy childhood for as long as possible.

MASON

Mom, I'm twenty-one. Isn't my childhood pretty
much done?

FRIDA

I hope not! I hope you're able to keep at least
a part of it with you forever.

MASON

The part you're carrying must be heavy as
hell.

FRIDA looks at him for a moment and then starts laughing. After a few
surprised moments, MASON joins her. ARCHIE is standing in the doorway with
two coffee cups.

ARCHIE

It's a beautiful thing.

MASON and FRIDA look at him and continue laughing. ARCHIE enters the
room and hands FRIDA one of the cups as he sits down.

MASON
(laughing)
Where's mine?

ARCHIE
Well, if ya go downstairs an' look on the counter next ta the sink, there's this machine-looking thing with a glass decanter. And in this decanter--

MASON
Everybody's got jokes.

ARCHIE
Just tryin' ta keep the laughter goin'.

FRIDA
Now boys, play nice.

ARCHIE
He started it.

MASON shakes his head as he gets up to leave.

FRIDA
Where you goin'?

MASON
To the machine-looking thing with the glass decanter. You two play nice.

MASON leaves the room. FRIDA and ARCHIE sip their coffee.

ARCHIE
So, did the earth open up and swallow you whole?

FRIDA
Huh?

ARCHIE
You finally tol' yo' baby yo' deep, dark secret. You still here an' you're laughing. I love to see you smile.

FRIDA
Especially if you put it there, right?

ARCHIE
Me. Mace. Winnie-the-Pooh. Whoever.

FRIDA frowns at ARCHIE.

ARCHIE
Sorry. Tigger.

FRIDA smiles and nods.

ARCHIE
Well?

FRIDA
Well, what?

ARCHIE stares at FRIDA.

FRIDA
Oh. Well, I'm gonna get up from here and take
a shower. Then, I'm gonna go to--

ARCHIE
No, I mean are we ok?

FRIDA
We in what sense, Archie?

ARCHIE
Free--

FRIDA
We as friends will always be ok. We as--

ARCHIE grabs FRIDA'S face in his hands and kisses her. The phone begins to ring. ARCHIE and FRIDA keep kissing for a moment and ARCHIE stops.

ARCHIE
If you don't know by now whatcha mean ta
me, woman--

FRIDA
Plain English, please. Not Archie-speak.

ARCHIE
It's you, baby. Jus' gimme a li'l mo' time.

ARCHIE picks up the receiver and hands the phone to FRIDA before she can respond.

BRIAN (O.S.)
Hello? ... Hello?

FRIDA
Hello? ...Hey, Bri--...what?! Where is she now? ...Ok ...yeah, yeah I'll be there in twenty.

FRIDA hangs up the phone. ARCHIE raises an eyebrow.

FRIDA
Olivia's in trouble.

ARCHIE
What happened?

FRIDA
I don't know. Brian mentioned something about her drawing her gun and getting suspended.

ARCHIE gets up and FRIDA does, too.

FRIDA
Ya see? The earth didn't swallow you whole, either.

ARCHIE
Hah. Hah.

FRIDA
Oh, yeah. I was gonna pick Maggie up and take her to the hospital.

ARCHIE
Ok. Well I have ta go home for a minute and then I'll take Maggie to the hospital.

FRIDA stops and looks at ARCHIE.

ARCHIE
Well, she can't kill me if I'm drivin', right?

FRIDA shrugs.

FRIDA
What about Janelle?

ARCHIE
That's why I gotta go home. I'm gonna pack a bag then stop at her house to make sure my baby is ok.

FRIDA
You can bring her here, you know. She can sleep in the spare bedroom.

ARCHIE
I'd love to, Free. She's always askin' me 'bout you and Mace. But, you know the deal.

FRIDA nods.

FRIDA
As always, jus' a suggestion. Give her a zrrbrt from me.

FRIDA kisses ARCHIE on the forehead and goes into the bathroom. ARCHIE leans into the doorway and watches FRIDA take off her robe and get into the shower. ARCHIE enters the bathroom and closes the door.

FRIDA (O.S.)
Archie, we don't have time for this.

ARCHIE (O.S.)
You'll get cleaner faster if I help. 'Sides I gotta take a shower, too and we'll just be savin' water this way.

FRIDA chuckles.

INT. OLIVIA'S KITCHEN -DAY

BRIAN and OLIVIA are sitting at the table. BRIAN is drinking coffee and OLIVIA is watching FRIDA make a lot of noise and a mess.

OLIVIA
Ay, Free! It would be easier if I just did it.

FRIDA

Easier, maybe, but not as much fun watching me fumble around in unknown territory.

BRIAN

Besides, ya need ta figure out whatcha gonna do.

OLIVIA

Do about what, little brotha?

BRIAN

Liv--

OLIVIA

Let's take a minute here, li'l bro. I almost killed someone, I didn't only draw my weapon for no good fuckin' reason and point it at my CO. I discharged my weapon while pointing it at a fellow officer. Not fer nothin' tho', watchin' Williams' face was worth that part. Let's face it Burton's one o' those ol' Gs that believe we belong in here doin' that and naked. If you idiots were real lucky. Let's also not forget me leavin' my daughter alone with a pedophile. We all caught up? I don't know 'bout you, Bri, but I think I done enough.

FRIDA

Ah, we've moved into the self-pity phase, have we? Woe is me, woe is me!

OLIVIA

Kiss my lef' tit, bitch.

BRIAN

Goddamn it! Couldja keep the jokes outta this for once.

OLIVIA barks a laugh.

OLIVIA

You could try payin' her li'l bro. But chu don't make that kinda money.

FRIDA

And for a measly extra \$9.99, I also make a mean lasagna. One time only deal. Get it while it's hot.

OLIVIA starts to laugh and then starts crying. FRIDA walks over to OLIVIA.

FRIDA

Come on, Liv. Let's get you somewhere where you can really let go.

FRIDA takes OLIVIA upstairs.

FRIDA (O.S.)

Brian make yourself useful and finish making breakfast!

BRIAN shakes his head and walks over to the stove. He stands there with a bewildered look on his face and then breaks an egg over a bowl and drops the shell in it.

BRIAN

Dey git what dey git.

INT. OLIVIA'S BEDROOM -DAY

FRIDA is undressing OLIVIA who is still crying.

OLIVIA

(sobbing)

What am I gonna do, Free?!

FRIDA

Right now, you're gonna cry yourself to sleep. When you wake up with a headache you're gonna take a couple o' Tylenol and then go save your daughter.

OLIVIA

(sobbing)

She'd be better off without me.

FRIDA slaps OLIVIA.

OLIVIA

Ow! What the fuck you do that for?

FRIDA

You wanna kill somebody? There's a perfectly good vegetable lying in a coma at county hospital. When you wake up, go pull his plug. That'll probably be more satisfying although less melodramatic. Listen ta me. Lizzy needs her mother here, not in some hole in a cemetery. Wait, if you kill yourself you can't be buried on holy ground. That just messes up my big speech. See? Suicide just ain't an option.

OLIVIA

You're a fuckin' nut, you know that?

FRIDA

All my practice paid off! Go to sleep, woman.

OLIVIA lies down and gets comfortable. FRIDA closes the door then stops. FRIDA re-enters the room and goes over to a chair where OLIVIA'S weapon is hanging in its holster. FRIDA takes it and begins to leave again.

FRIDA

Just in case you get anymore bright ideas.

FRIDA closes the door.

OLIVIA

Bitch.

FRIDA (O.S.)

Love you too!

EXT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE -DAY

ARCHIE pulls into the driveway just as MASON rides up on his bike.

ARCHIE

Hey!

MASON

Can I ride witchu you guys?

ARCHIE

You don't hafta, Mace. I can handle your grandmother.

MASON

(chuckling)

You're probably the only one who can, Archie.
You're not afraid of anything or anybody, are
you?

ARCHIE

Nope.

MASON

How do you do that?

ARCHIE

I got a process, I go through. I got a small but
powerful group of people that love and care
about and for me. Just gotta find yo' process,
man.

MASON

Ya make it sound so simple.

ARCHIE

That's the first step in yo' process. Keep it
simple.

MASON

Oh, yeah. K.I.S.S.

ARCHIE

No... a hug'd be better and less painful.

MASON

Painful?

ARCHIE

You kiss me an' then I knock ya the fuck out!

MASON

(laughing)

I see what Mom means. It's real hard not to
like somebody that makes ya laugh. No. I
meant K.I.S.S. Keep It Simple Stupid?

MAGGIE comes out of the house and walks over to the car. MAGGIE stops near
MASON and gives him her cheek. MASON kisses MAGGIE.

MAGGIE
Where's my daughter?

ARCHIE
(aside)
Uh oh. I've done it now.

MASON
Hi, Gramma.

MAGGIE
You need a shave. Where's your mother?

ARCHIE
My girlfriend is seein' 'bout Olivia, Mrs. Juarez.
I offered ta come 'n getcha 'n take you to the
hospital.

MAGGIE
Your uncle will appreciate you coming,
Mason.

ARCHIE opens the front passenger door for MAGGIE, but she gets in the back.
MASON raises an eyebrow and gets in the front.

MASON
Such a gentleman.

ARCHIE
Oh, got jokes.

ARCHIE closes the door and gets in the driver's side.

INT. CAR -DAY

ARCHIE is waiting at a red light.

MASON
Gramma what did you do when you found out
Mitchell molested my mother.

ARCHIE winces and shakes his head. MAGGIE is silent and MASON turns
around in his seat and faces her.

MASON
Gramma?

MAGGIE

So she told you.

MASON

This morning.

MAGGIE

I'm surprised you're talking to me. She won't.

MASON

Answer my question, Gramma.

MAGGIE

What do you mean "what did I do"? What should I have done?

MASON

That's not an answer, Gramma.

MAGGIE

It's the only one I have for you.

MASON turns to face the front.

ARCHIE

How about some music?

ARCHIE turns on the radio and Mason snaps it off.

MASON

Did you at least apologize?

MAGGIE

For what? I didn't do anything?!

MASON

Exactly.

MAGGIE

Oh we know so much now that we're twenty-one, don't we? Find a job yet, Mason? Or are you still sponging off of your mother?

ARCHIE pulls over and turns around to face MAGGIE.

ARCHIE

How 'bout ya lay off him, huh? His world has been rocked, you've had years to get used ta get used to it. I don't agree wit' how he's sayin' it but he jus' wants some answers.

MAGGIE

What business is any of this to you? You're in and out of my daughter's life like some manic hokey pokey dancer. How about you love her or leave her.

ARCHIE turns back around and pulls off.

ARCHIE

Well, we both know you'd rather I leave her. But, as much as ya love bein' the center of attention, this ain't about you, Moms!

MASON holds back laughter and stares out of his window.

MAGGIE

Mason, you gonna let him talk to your grandmother like that?

MASON

Better him than me, Gramma. I have too much respect to say what I want.

MAGGIE

At least you're mother taught you that much. You're respect is appreciated, Grandson.

MASON

I was talking about respect for my mother, not you. You gotta give it to get it and let's face it-- ya don't respect me or my moms. But then you don't even respect yourself, so no wonder.

ARCHIE watches through the rear-view mirror as MAGGIE'S eyes tear up and she closes them tightly to prevent the tears from falling. There is a long silence and then ARCHIE turns on the radio.

ARCHIE

(whispering)

Man, that's yo' gran'mother.

MASON

Only by relation. She used ta be my grandma. She used ta be a real comfort ta me when I was havin' a hard time. Now, every time she sees me she criticizes me. Every time. Maybe it is 'cause I'm twenty-one. Maybe it's 'cause I'm taking out my anger for Mitchell, on her. Whatever it is, Archie, I don't care. But she needs ta know how I feel. I'm not inta keeping shit inside anymore, that's my mom's thing.

ARCHIE

I hea' ya. Jus' work on yo' presentation. That's one o' my things, too. But sometimes it's jus' gotta be said the way it sounds in yo' head, right?

MASON looks at ARCHIE and ARCHIE stares out of the wind shield, trying to hold back a smile.

EXT. ALICIA'S APARTMENT BUILDING -DAY

BRIAN, FRIDA and OLIVIA pull up in BRIAN'S car. No one moves to get out of the car. OLIVIA, who is sitting in the front passenger seat, opens her door.

FRIDA

First you put your right leg out and then--

OLIVIA

Shut up.

FRIDA

Shuttin' up.

BRIAN

When the two o' you are finished wit' yo' act--

OLIVIA

Which part of shut up don't you get?

OLIVIA gets out of the car and FRIDA gets out of the back and begins to sit in the front.

OLIVIA

Wait! Ain't you guys comin' wit' me?

BRIAN

Been there, done that.

FRIDA

I have to get to the hospital before Archie persuades some plastic surgeon to have my mom's lips sewn shut. Besides, if ever there was a mother/daughter moment--

BRIAN

Come on, Sis! It's Lizzy not some crackhead!

FRIDA

She'd probably rather face the crackhead. Go salvage your daughter's childhood. Trust me when I say, if she skips it altogether, she's doomed to live it out the rest of her life.

OLIVIA hugs and kisses FRIDA.

OLIVIA

Shut up.

FRIDA

I'm a phone call away.

FRIDA gets in the car and OLIVIA watches as they drive away. OLIVIA turns and faces the building.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR -DAY

BRIAN and FRIDA are driving along the highway. FRIDA is staring out of her window.

BRIAN

Didja hear me?

FRIDA

Yes.

BRIAN

I know you play it cool, girl but damn! I mean--

FRIDA

If your sister can't give her the help she needs, it's only gonna get worse.

BRIAN

'Livia's strong, Free, but I don't know. I mean ya see like how she's with our moms. Mami can get anything she want outta her. She tough fo' her job, but when it come to fam'ly, well...

BRIAN pulls into the hospital parking structure and finds a space.

FRIDA

Lizzy has all of you, Brian. Not just all of you but all of us. There may not be any legal document verifying this, but we're family. After the fucked up family I grew up in... Lizzy's damn lucky, 's all I'm tryin' to say.

BRIAN stares at FRIDA for a moment as she gets her bag and opens the car door.

BRIAN

Ya'll got a lot o' secrets, don't y'all.

FRIDA

If you only knew.

FRIDA gets out of the car and BRIAN does too.

INT. ALICIA'S LIVINGROOM -DAY

ALICIA and OLIVIA are sitting on the sofa.

OLIVIA

What's she been doin', Mami?

ALICIA

Durmiendo, adivino.

OLIVIA

You guess? Didn't you check on her?

ALICIA

Why I gotta check? Ella no es un bebé.

OLIVIA stares at her mother and shakes her head.

OLIVIA
A veces yo me pregunto acerca de usted, Ma.

OLIVIA
I am your mother. That's all you need to understand.

INT. JENNY'S BEDROOM -DAY

LIZZY is sitting at JENNY'S computer. There is an image of a man on the screen. LIZZY is chatting to him and laughing.

LIZZY
(typing)
You don't look old.

MAN ON SCREEN (O.S.)
I wish I could see you cutie. Don't you at least have a mic so I can hear your voice?

LIZZY looks around and spies a microphone in a box on the floor next to the desk. LIZZY plugs it in.

LIZZY
That better?

MAN ON SCREEN (O.S.)
How old are you?

LIZZY
I told you, eighteen.

MAN ON SCREEN (O.S.)
You sound really cute. As cute as your picture. Tell me, what's that you're wearing?

LIZZY
A big t-shirt. It's like a dress on me. I'm wearin' it, now.

MAN ON SCREEN (O.S.)
That's all?

LIZZY

Mm mmmm.

MAN ON SCREEN (O.S.)

That sounds so sexy, baby. Do you like to masturbate?

LIZZY

Huh?

MAN ON SCREEN (O.S.)

You know. You like to make yourself cum?

LIZZY

Oh! Oh, yeah. I do that all the time.

MAN ON SCREEN (O.S.)

Do it for me now. Let me hear you cum.

LIZZY

Can I see you first?

MAN ON SCREEN (O.S.)

Is the picture blurry? Can'tcha see me good?

LIZZY

(giggling)

No, silly. I mean *you*.

MAN ON SCREEN (O.S.)

Oh, sure baby.

CUT TO:

OLIVIA

Mami, I don't got time for this. I gotta help Lizzy.

ALICIA

Oh, you have time to insult your mother, pero usted no tiene tiempo de escuchar para presentir. You bring this man into your bed because you can't keep your legs closed. ¡Y su abuelo de hijo! ¡Qué pensaba usted?!

OLIVIA

I'm sorry, Mami but what exactly bothers you more? That I have a sex life or that your granddaughter was molested. ¿Por favor, Mami, me dice para lo que debo estar disculpándome a usted?

ALICIA slaps OLIVIA.

OLIVIA

(laughing)

Mami, that's always yo' answer. Don'tcha ever have anything new to say?

OLIVIA gets up and walks toward JENNY'S bedroom.

INT. JENNY'S BEDROOM -DAY

LIZZY is still sitting in the chair, but now her legs are draped over either arm. LIZZY'S head is thrown back and she is moaning.

MAN ON SCREEN

Oh, yeah baby. You sound so good.

OLIVIA (O.S.)

Oh my God.

LIZZY jumps and shuts down the computer. LIZZY doesn't face OLIVIA. OLIVIA comes into the room and spins LIZZY around in the chair and slaps her. LIZZY starts crying and OLIVIA falls to her knees and puts her arms around LIZZY.

INT. HOSPITAL FAMILY ROOM -DAY

FRIDA and BRIAN walk into the room. DR. CRITTENDEN, MAGGIE and MANNY are sitting around a small table. MASON and ARCHIE are sitting in chairs on the other side of the room. FRIDA and BRIAN go over to ARCHIE and MASON and sit down.

BRIAN

So, you can hear what they're sayin'?

ARCHIE

We could.

BRIAN

My bad.

MASON

It's ok. Now they're into options. We've heard the ugly stuff.

FRIDA

Ugly stuff?

ARCHIE

Didja know he had beginning stages Alzheimer's?

FRIDA tilt's her head and raises an eyebrow.

ARCHIE

Oh, yeah. My bag. Non-person. Right, well, anyway he does.

FRIDA

God really don't like ugly.

ARCHIE

Amen, baby.

MASON

You know about the vegetative state thing?

FRIDA

Yeah, I know about the vegetative state thing.

DR> CRITTENDEN gets up and MAGGIE stands up and shakes his hand. BRIAN, MASON and ARCHIE look at FRIDA.

FRIDA

What.

They continue to stare at FRIDA. FRIDA stares back at MASON.

MASON

Uh, uh. Mom I play interference between you and Gramma all the time 'cause I love ya. I think I've done it once too many, though.

FRIDA

What don't I know.

ARCHIE

Let's just say your baby boy's on his way to
bein' a good man.

MASON

Later, Mom.

FRIDA

I guess so.

ARCHIE

Well?

FRIDA sticks out her tongue at ARCHIE.

ARCHIE

Hold that thought.

FRIDA gets up and goes over to MAGGIE and MANNY.

FRIDA

Hey.

MANNY

Hey.

MAGGIE

We have to talk about your son.

MANNY

Not now, Mom.

MAGGIE

I just think she should know what an
ungrateful--

MANNY slams his hand down on the table. MAGGIE stiffens and then leaves
the room. FRIDA sits down.

FRIDA

So?

MANNY

What? Oh. Dr. Crittenden says that Pop was a
walkin' time bomb.

FRIDA
I'll say.

MANNY
Huh?

FRIDA
A walking timb bomb?

MANNY
Yeah. Didja know he had beginning stages
Alzheimer's?

FRIDA
Mason overheard and jus' told me.

MANNY
First time I heard it. Mom knew.

FRIDA
Doesn't surprise me.

MANNY
I don't get her. Why wouldn't she tell me
somethin' like that?

FRIDA
She plays things close.

MANNY
Guess you'd know 'bout that.

FRIDA and MANNY stare at each other for a moment.

FRIDA
It's not the time.

MANNY
Perfect time. Perfect place. If my head
explodes the best brain surgeon in the
country has hours here. Nurse Ash told me.

FRIDA
Nurse Ash, huh?

MANNY
Uh, uh. No changin' the subject.

FRIDA

Fine. Your father started molesting me when I was six years old.

MANNY falls back into his chair.

FRIDA

You should listen to me more, Dr. Jones. You live longer.

MANNY

An' you joke about it?

FRIDA

What should I do, brother o' mine? Tear out my hair and beat at my chest? Been there, done that. That's how I joke about it. It's a part of me, but it doesn't rule me anymore. Been there and done that, too.

MANNY looks at her as if for the first time.

FRIDA

Explains a lot?

MANNY

Volumes.

FRIDA

Good. I'm glad you've gotten some clarity. Now, you were saying?

MANNY

Huh?

FRIDA

You're father.

MANNY

My father. You amaze the shit outta me. You are fuckin' amazing!

ARCHIE holds up his finger to MASON who is whispering to him.

FRIDA

Amazing? Nah. I like sweet better.

MANNY

Now I understand the stand-up comedy bullshit! You need ta build this comic fortress 'round yo' heart ta protect all the shit going on inside you. That's where ya feel safe, ain't it! But didja ever stop ta think 'bout anybody being affected by you hidin' da truth behind your fortress? Imagine what wouldn't o' happened if you'd come clean 'bout this mess.

FRIDA

I see so what Mitchell did ta Lizzy is my fault. Wow.

MANNY

That also probably explains why you bein' so helpful and considerate 'bout all this hospital shit. When ya heard he was in a vegetative state, you couldn't wait ta be helpful.

MANNY stands and puts his hands on the table to lean on it. ARCHIE stands up and FRIDA holds up her hand and waves to him to sit back down, but ARCHIE remains standing. MASON is out of his chair, too.

MANNY

You just can't wait ta pull the plug yourself. Can you?

FRIDA just stares at MANNY.

FRIDA

Wow.

MANNY

Wow, what?!

FRIDA

You have no idea who I am, do you?

MANNY

How could I. You too busy playin'g shit close, just like your mother.

FRIDA sits back and shakes her head. FRIDA gets up to leave and then sits down again.

FRIDA

Do you really think I'm capable of that? Ending a life? I thought you knew me. When have I ever been violent. Shit! You used to torture me like there was no tomorrow. Did I ever touch you? Hurt you? Fight back? No, I just tol' your mother and left it to her to do nothin'! Back then it was 'cause I thought deserved every bad thing that happened to me. Like I wasn't worthy of anything good. Then I had Mason and that changed 'cause God actually let me have a beautiful, healthy child. A being that I was responsible for. That made me feel better 'bout myself. Then I go an' mess that up 'cause I couldn't get close to him 'cause I was behind a wall. No, Manny, my brotha. You're wrong 'bout the jokes, the sarcasm. It's whats helping to break down that wall. You've been wrong before, but this is a way different level of wrong.

MANNY

I know whatcha say, Free. I also know that you're real emotional an' you git real angry, really quickly 'bout the li'lest shit. So, yeah. I know you. I been payin' attention. Sure, you may think you're over yourself, but the anger and violence you try real hard to hide, comes out in li'l spurts. I seem ta 'member somebody tryin' to make me a permanent part of a wall once 'cause I hurt her son by accident. Wait let me think. Oh yeah. She looked a lot like you.

FRIDA

That's different. That was my son and I was protecting him.

MANNY

No, Free. I saw yo' face. In yo' eyes. There was nothin' in 'em. Like you didn't even see me or whatchu were doing.

FRIDA

I knew exactly what I was doing. Getting your fuckin' attention onta me an' offa Mace.

MANNY rolls up his sleeve. There is a long, vertical scar along the length of his forearm. FRIDA looks at it impassively.

MANNY

Way ta get my attention, sis.

FRIDA

Whatever works. I told you I was sorry.

MANNY

Yeah, you also said you didn't do it.

FRIDA

I was angry.

MANNY

No, Free you were enraged. That's what that was. So, don't tell me thatchur not capable o' somethin' like that.

Tears begin to fall down FRIDA'S face and she wipes them away, angrily.

FRIDA

Listen, you selfish li'l bastard. That's the one thing that I'm doing my damndest to avoid. If you're angry 'cause o' what I jus' tol' ya then go exorcise yourself and pull your father's plug. Maybe you can live with it. Maybe you'd be OK with it. I'd rather be able to sleep at night.

MANNY

Oh, yeah. I forgot. You're always the bettah person. Always acceptance and obedience to the rules. Don't think that I don't know there's a fuckin' monster coiled way deep down. Now I know why it's there. You need to accept that. Yeah, I know you.

FRIDA is crying and before anyone can react ARCHIE has MANNY on his feet and pinned against the wall.

ARCHIE

You listen to me, you spoiled fuckin' mama's boy. I have sat back and listened to you and about you. I ain't done a thing.

(MORE)

ARCHIE (cont'd)

Don't think it's 'cause I feel anythin' good fo' yo' ass. It's 'cause yo' sistah love ya and I love her. But I'm fucked if I'm gonna watch you throw yo' weight around and intimidate her or anybody else, so you can getchur way. I'm real sorry 'bout your father. I say father because any man who can do what he did to yo' sister can't possibly be a dad. I'm sorry 'bout the kind of father you were unblessed 'nough to draw. But don't stand there and call her a monster. No. You don't wanna do that, boy. 'Cause you don't really believe in monsters. Nah uh. But I'll be da one ta make you believe.

FRIDA tries to coax ARCHIE off of MANNY.

ARCHIE

Baby, I love you dearly, but you need ta step off. Right now.

FRIDA quickly pulls back and bumps into MASON who is coming to help.

FRIDA

Nah, baby. This is outta our hands.

BRIAN is standing near the chairs and he starts to pace back and forth.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Let go of him!

FRIDA

Ok, Maggie? You need to stay right where you are and shut up for once.

ARCHIE, who still has MANNY pinned to the wall, turns and looks at MAGGIE.

ARCHIE

Don't you worry 'bout a thing, Mrs. J. I'm not gonna hurtcha baby boy. 'Though if you don't mind me sayin' ya might wanna start treatin' him like he was man Considerin' he's thirty an' all.

ARCHIE turns back to MANNY.

MANNY

Get the fuck off me. Don't let me git started on you, playa. Yeah, all this we're-not-in-a-committed-relationship-so-I-can-fuck-any-woman-I-want bullshit. You may have my sister snowed, but cha only foolin' yourself, man.

ARCHIE starts laughing and backs away from MANNY. ARCHIE grabs FRIDA and kisses her. ARCHIE takes FRIDA'S hand and places her car keys in them. Then he wraps her fingers around them and kisses the back of her hand.

ARCHIE

I'll meetcha at your place later.

FRIDA

How're you gonna get there?

ARCHIE stops and bows at MAGGIE, who turns away. Then he leaves the room.

INT. JENNY'S BEDROOM -DAY

OLIVIA is on her knees, rocking LIZZY and crying. LIZZY has stopped crying and is holding OLIVIA.

LIZZY

Mommy?

OLIVIA doesn't answer.

LIZZY

Mommy don't cry. I don't like it when you cry. Your eyes get all puffy and it ain't pretty.

OLIVIA stops rocking and laughs.

OLIVIA

Can you ever forgive me?

LIZZY

Whatcha do?

OLIVIA

I didn't see, baby. I didn't see what that man was doin'. I didn't know. But I know now.

LIZZY pulls away from OLIVIA and sits on the bed.

LIZZY
I wasn't doing anything. Don't be mad.

OLIVIA
Mad?

LIZZY
Mitch said if you found out you'd be mad
'cause you want him for yourself. Is that
whatcha want? Is that why you're cryin'?

OLIVIA goes over to OLIVIA on her knees.

OLIVIA
Look at me. Look at me, baby. Do I look mad?

LIZZY shakes her head.

OLIVIA
Ya know I love you, right?

LIZZY nods.

OLIVIA
Ya know I would never, ever, ever lie to ya,
right? What do I say?

LIZZY giggles.

LIZZY
May abuela stick a fork in my tongue.

OLIVIA and LIZZY laugh.

OLIVIA
So, when I tell you that Mitchell Martin is a bad
man, you'd believe me, right?

LIZZY is silent and serious.

LIZZY
Papi Mitchell don't lie either, Mommy.

OLIVIA

Yes, he does baby and he's not chur papi. You know that Lizbeth. He also shouldn't o' touched ya the way he did. It ain't right and it's illegal. I know you hear me tellin' abuela 'bout some o' the bad people I put in jail. What they do sometimes to their kids. Mitchell is like that.

MITCHELL is crying and shaking her head.

OLIVIA

Yes, baby. It's true. I know it hurts. I know you can't believe that he lied to you. He prob'ly told you that he was the only one who loves you, right?

LIZZY and OLIVIA grab each other at the same time and end up back on the floor.

LIZZY

(sobbing)

He said that the way he touched me was to show me how much he loved me. That all men in families showed their love like that to the women in their families.

OLIVIA

No, baby. Don't. Don't.

LIZZY

It felt wrong at first and it hurt real bad. But then I got used to it and he would buy me presents and he paid attention to me and he wasn't ever mad at me 'cause I always did what he said.

Tears are streaming down OLIVIA'S angry face as she tries to comfort LIZZY.

INT. HOSPITAL FAMILY ROOM -DAY

MAGGIE is fussing over MANNY who is just starin' at FRIDA.

MAGGIE

What are you thinking to let that fucking asshole into this family. You should see the influence he's had on your son.

MASON

Oh, don't blame that on Archie, Gramma. I wanted some answers. Still do. But if it makes ya feel any better, I still love ya. Don't like ya much, but there's nothin' I wouldn't do for ya.

FRIDA barely hides a smile. MANNY moves as though he's going to start in on MASON.

FRIDA

I wouldn't if I were you. All emotional and shit over here. I might not be content with a scar this time.

MAGGIE

I can't believe what I'm hearing from the two of you.

FRIDA goes over to MAGGIE and gently herds her over to a chair.

FRIDA

Well, ya might wanna sit for this one, Moms!

MAGGIE

You know I hate--

FRIDA

Hate it when I talk too Black. Yeah, I got that, Mom. Ya see, that's part o' the problem, but way too deep ta get into right now. Well, maybe a little. Ya got stop hatin' yourself. Well, the Black part o' you, anyway. If ya liked yourself more you'd maybe start to like other people and then you wouldn't be so dependent on your family for company all the time. 'Nough said 'bout dat. Besides, I have some news to relate to you and I require your attention. There. Was that better?

MAGGIE sucks her teeth and sits back in the chair.

FRIDA

Ya need ta know what's been going on in the world while you've been holding your baby boy's hand. You need ta know 'bout Mitchell.

MAGGIE

I know all about Mitchell as it relates to you, Frida. I don't need to hear it anymore. On and on and on about what that man--

FRIDA

Oh, no, Mom! This ain't 'bout me anymore. This is all about Mitchell and Lizzy.

MAGGIE is staring at FRIDA as if she doesn't know who she is.

MAGGIE

There is no level of depravity that you won't stoop to in order to be the center of attention.

FRIDA

Thanks for the compliment, Mother, but I already know what a fine opinion you have of me. No, Mitchell really did get his pedophilia thing on with Lizzy and Olivia did walk in on 'em and Mitchell did most judiciously have a stroke. So, ya see, Maggie? This is most certainly not about me but about an innocent little girl who had the choice of who to give her virginity to taken away from her.

BRIAN

It's true, Mrs. J. An' I think I need to be goin'.

FRIDA

Thanks for everything, Bri.

BRIAN

No sweat.

BRIAN leaves the room. FRIDA gets up and goes over to MASON and hugs him. MASON kisses her on her forehead. She caresses MASON'S face.

FRIDA

You are right about one thing, Manny. I probably should have revealed your dad as the complete waste of skin, breath and soul that he is. Might have made it impossible for Lizzy to be exposed to his evil.

FRIDA turns and looks at MAGGIE.

FRIDA

But I won't carry that around by myself, will I Mom?

FRIDA takes MASON'S hand and they begin to leave the room.

FRIDA

On second thought, I don't think I'll carry that around at all. You can have it, Mom. I mean you earned it after all. You're the one who cares so much what people will think and how you'll appear. You've fought real hard for that. This is your reward.

MASON pulls FRIDA out of the room. MAGGIE looks at MANNY seeking support. he turns away from her in disgust. Then MANNY gets up and picks his coat up off a nearby chair.

MAGGIE

You agree with her, don't you. You blame me, too.

MANNY

It's an int'restin' idea, though. Would Lizzy be ok if ya had done somethin' or encouraged Free to?

MAGGIE and MANNY stare at each other as he walks past her toward the door. He stops next to her and kisses her on top of her head.

MANNY

Too much silence, Mom. That's why we're here.

MANNY leaves the room and MAGGIE slumps back in the chair as tears silently then she takes out her cell phone and dials a number.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -DAY

MANNY is looks at MITCHELL as he puts his jacket on the chair next to the bed.

FRIDA (O.S.)

It's not worth it.

MANNY keeps staring at MITCHELL. FRIDA stands at the foot of the bed.

MANNY

Where's Mace?

FRIDA

Nature break.

MANNY

I'm sorry.

FRIDA

I know you are, Manny. You're always sorry and I always forgive you. I forgive you now, but ya really need ta getcha head outta yo' ass and pay attention to people. Sure I get angry; even enraged but--

MANNY

I know, Free. I know you'd never be able to actually pull the plug on him.

FRIDA

Oh I could do it. Don't get it twisted. I just couldn't live with me and that's one thing I'm beginning to enjoy. Don't wanna mess it up now.

FRIDA and MANNY hug and then she pulls back and punches him. MANNY winces and rubs his arm.

FRIDA

Just had ta get that out.

MANNY

Glad to be of help. Damn! Feel better, now?

FRIDA

Much. Ok, next?

MANNY

You recover quick.

FRIDA

Only 'cause I know what it's like to hold on to shit. It's like trying to breathe and walk in molasses. You didn't finish telling me. What are his options?

MANNY

Death or life like this.

FRIDA

Have you had a chance to think about it?

MANNY

What's there to think about? Besides, it's not my say.

FRIDA

What're you talking about?

MANNY

He gave Mom say so. Back when he was workin' in Whippany? He never changed it.

FRIDA starts laughing. MANNY frowns at her and joins in the laughter.

MASON (O.S.)

What's so funny?

FRIDA and MANNY look at MASON and continue laughing. MASON enters and stands on the opposite side of the bed.

FRIDA

You're grandmother... this is incredible--
You're grandfather left it up to her.

MASON just stares at FRIDA.

MANNY

Mace, your grandfather--

MASON

Please don't call him that anymore.

FRIDA

'K. Mitchell left power of attorney to your grandmother. That means it's her decision which option to take.

MASON

What're they?

FRIDA

Whether he lives like a vegetable or not.

MASON

Not being death?

FRIDA looks at MASON.

MANNY

Does he know?

MASON

What? That your dad is a pedophile? Oh, yeah. I know. Now.

FRIDA

Been a day of revelations, huh fellas?

MANNY and MASON just look at FRIDA.

MASON

So whaddya think she'll do?

MANNY

Who?

MASON

Gramma.

FRIDA

Ya know? For once I ain't got the faintest idea. That's a first.

MANNY

I know whatcha mean. I been rollin' it around in my head for a minute, Free. Usually, I know exactly what I'll get from her. But this? Not a clue.

FRIDA

Why don't we jus' ask her? Where'd you leave her, anyway?

MANNY

In the family room.

MASON

I'll go git 'er.

MASON leaves the room.

MANNY

Ya know, Sis. You didn't do too bad wit him.

FRIDA

Exqueeze me?!

MANNY

I'm tryin' ta say that he turned out alright.

FRIDA

Yikes! Was that a compliment?

MANNY

Geez, accept a compliment and move on, will ya!

DR CRITTENDEN (O.S.)

Excuse me, Mr. Juarez. Your mother asked me to tell you that she'll be back in an hour or so.

FRIDA

Did she say where she was going?

DR CRITTENDEN

No, I'm sorry, she didn't. She just got on the elevator and asked me to give you that message.

DR. CRITTENDEN smiles and closes the door. MANNY and FRIDA look at each other.

INT. JENNY'S BEDROOM -DAY

OLIVIA is tucking LIZZY into bed.

LIZZY
You're not leaving?

OLIVIA
No way. Not even when you fall asleep.

OLIVIA closes the blinds and lays down next to LIZZY.

LIZZY
Am I a freak?

OLIVIA
What?! Nobody thinks you're a freak, baby.

LIZZY
Tricia Woodson thinks so.

OLIVIA
Who?

LIZZY
Tricia Woodson, Mom! I spent the night at her house last Halloween?

OLIVIA
Oh, her! Why'd she call you a freak?

LIZZY
We were all in sleeping bags on the floor around her bed and I couldn't sleep. So I began to, uh, well touch myself.

OLIVIA
Touch yourself?

LIZZY
You know. Down there. And Tricia had got up to go to the bathroom and she saw me. The next day she told me she knew what I was doin'. I tried to play it off but she said she caught her mother doin' it once and she knew what it was.

(MORE)

LIZZY (cont'd)

She said I was a freak just like her mom. That I was gonna be a slut just like her.

OLIVIA turns LIZZY to face her.

OLIVIA

You're not like that. I found out just in time and we can fix this! It's just like with my gun, right? What do I say about my gun.

LIZZY

That you'll never have to pull it out. You choose to use smarts, not force.

OLIVIA nods and they get comfortable again.

OLIVIA

You're not a freak.

OLIVIA closes her eyes.

LIZZY

Do I have to stop doin' it?

OLIVIA

Doing what?

LIZZY

Touching myself.

INT. ALICIA'S BEDROOM -DAY

ALICIA is kneeling in front of the altar praying when the door bell rings. She ignores it and keeps praying. After a few moments, the doorbell rings again. ALICIA slams her hand on the altar table and gets up.

INT. ALICIA'S LIVINGROOM -DAY

ALICIA opens the door to see MAGGIE turning to leave.

ALICIA

Maggie?

MAGGIE turns back toward the door.

MAGGIE

Alicia...uh...

ALICIA steps back and motions to MAGGIE to come in. MAGGIE enters and ALICIA closes the door.

MAGGIE

You have a nice home.

ALICIA

You sound like this surprises you.

MAGGIE

Do I? I guess I am. And for that I'm truly sorry.

MAGGIE begins sobbing which surprises ALICIA. ALICIA goes over to MAGGIE and pulls her over to the sofa. ALICIA sits MAGGIE down and goes into the kitchen.

MAGGIE

(crying)

No, Alicia...please, I don't want to be any trouble!

INT. ALICIA'S KITCHEN -DAY

ALICIA gets a glass from a cabinet and fills it with water from the refrigerator.

ALICIA

¡También tarde no ser problema, la mujer!

INT. ALICIA'S LIVINGROOM -DAY

MAGGIE is wiping her nose with a tissue. ALICIA comes back with the water and gives it to MAGGIE.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

ALICIA

De nada.

MAGGIE drinks some water. She and ALICIA sit silently for a few moments. MAGGIE looks at the picture of Jesus on the wall.

MAGGIE

My mother had a picture just like that.

ALICIA looks at the picture and nods.

ALICIA

That belonged to my mother.

MAGGIE

Alicia, I'm so sorry.

ALICIA

For what?

MAGGIE

I should have said something to Olivia. If I had, none of this would have happened.

ALICIA

I don't understand.

MAGGIE

I knew what he was. Mitchell. I knew what he was and I didn't say anything.

ALICIA just stares at MAGGIE.

MAGGIE

But the more terrible than that. I knew before Frida told me what he'd done.

MAGGIE puts the glass on the coffee table and grabs ALICIA'S hands.

MAGGIE

I would let him beat her naked lying across the bed. You should have seen his face, Alicia. He didn't only enjoy it... he would.. he would be so rough with me in bed that night. It excited him. I knew then. I knew his attention for my Frida was unnatural.

MAGGIE looks back at the picture.

MAGGIE

Unholy, evil and I let him do it all and said nothing.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (cont'd)

And because of that, because of my denial, your beautiful granddaughter was damaged because of it. I was more interested in what people would think of me, rather than doing what was good for Frida.

ALICIA

Why you are here, Maggie?

INT. JENNY'S BEDROOM -DAY

OLIVIA is sitting in front of the computer. OLIVIA turns to look at LIZZY asleep on the bed. OLIVIA turns back to the computer and resumes typing. Two chimes emanate from the computer.

OLIVIA

(whispering)

Ah, Captain Rosa... suspension not pursued... mandatory psych evaluations for ninety days... whatever.

LIZZY (O.C.)

Mommy?

OLIVIA gets up and goes over to LIZZY.

OLIVIA

Right here. Bad dream?

LIZZY

Heard a voice.

OLIVIA

Sorry, baby. I was just reading an email from work.

LIZZY

Aren't they gonna be mad?

OLIVIA

Why?

LIZZY

'Cause you're not there.

OLIVIA

I'm where I'm s'posed to be. I found somebody that we can go talk to.

LIZZY sits up suddenly.

LIZZY

We can't!

OLIVIA

Why, Lizzy? What's the matter? What're you afraid of?

LIZZY

(hysterical)

He'll find out! He'll find out and he'll come here and kill us! He told me so!

INT. ALICIA'S LIVINGROOM -DAY

ALICIA and MAGGIE head toward JENNY'S bedroom door.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -DAY

FRIDA flips her cell phone closed as MASON comes back into the room.

MASON

No answer?

FRIDA shakes her head.

MASON

She's probably off somewhere sulking.

FRIDA

Maybe.

The door opens and FRIDA and MANNY turn expectantly.

DR CRITTENDEN

Mr. Martin, you know there aren't supposed to be this many people in here at one time.

MANNY

Yeah, Doc, well we're waiting to hear from my Mom.

DR CRITTENDEN

There's no hurry. We understand that this is a difficult decision and I'm sure that Mrs. Juarez has a lot of thinking to do.

FRIDA

We understand that from your point of view, doctor, there's no hurry. After all, I'm sure you and the hospital are just tickled pink to keep taking our money while this vegetable lies here hooked up here like some high school kid's lab experiment, but--

MASON

Mom? Not the time.

FRIDA

Mason? I'm glad you are feelin' manly and all and I'm proud of you for standing up to your grandmother. Believe me when I tell you, son that the hair on your balls ain't long enough ta talk ta me like that.

MASON holds up his hands in surrender and sits in a chair by the window.

DR CRITTENDEN

Hmm mmm. I'll be in my office when your mother returns, Mr. Juarez.

MANNY, visibly surprised by FRIDA'S response to MASON, nods absently. FRIDA gives DR. CRITTENDEN the peace sign as he exits the room.

MANNY

Okaaay, u m, you want fries wit' that large peace of Mace's head you jus' bit off?

MASON

Nah, man. She's right. Respect, ya know?

FRIDA winks at MASON and he smiles.

MANNY

I'm gonna go get somethin' ta drink. Anybody want something?

MASON

I'll come witcha. Mom?

FRIDA

A Guinness would be just the thing right now.

MASON and MANNY just stand and look at FRIDA.

FRIDA

Yeah. Ok. Fine. Coffee. Cream an' two Equals or Splendas.

MASON nods and he and MANNY leave the room.

FRIDA

At least Guinness woulda made it more fun to be this damn awake.

INT. JENNY'S BEDROOM -DAY

OLIVIA tries to grab LIZZY, but LIZZY is out of bed walking around the room in agitation. ALICIA and MAGGIE come into the room.

ALICIA

¿Pasa qué demonios aquí dentro?

LIZZY runs over to ALICIA. MAGGIE and OLIVIA look at each other.

LIZZY

Tell her not to, abuela! Make her be quiet!

OLIVIA

Lizzy! What is wrong with you?! We have to talk to somebody!

ALICIA holds LIZZY and glares at OLIVIA.

ALICIA

This is what you call helping? ¡Ella es histérica! Esta buena, mijita! Calmate! Calmate!

ALICIA takes LIZZY out of the room. Olivia sits on the bed in shock and MAGGIE is still standing in the same spot, unsure of what to do next.

OLIVIA

What do you want?

MAGGIE

I don't want anything, Olivia. I have to be here.

OLIVIA

You have to--

MAGGIE

I have to do something. I wasn't sure what that was until I came in here.

MAGGIE sits on the bed next to OLIVIA. OLIVIA eyes MAGGIE suspiciously.

MAGGIE

The question has been raised as to whether or not Mitchell would have hurt Lizzy, if I had done something when I knew that he had molested Frida. I say "knew" and not "found out", because, as I was telling your mother not a moment ago, I felt there was something not quite right about him when I introduced him to Frida. My feelings turned into certainty the first time I let him beat her. She didn't tell you that part, did she?

OLIVIA shakes her head slowly. MAGGIE nods.

MAGGIE

Frida gets that from me. Holding things in. Anyway, I knew and I did nothing. My children seem to think that if I did, I wouldn't be sitting here having this conversation with you. And I certainly wouldn't be asking your permission to speak with you and Lizzy. I'm not completely sure, Olivia, but I think it might help.

OLIVIA is just staring at MAGGIE in shock. MAGGIE starts laughing and it seems to snap OLIVIA out of her trance.

MAGGIE

I wouldn't blame you if you shared Frida's opinions of me. She is really good at reading people, myself included. However, she also inherited insecurity from me and when others question or dismiss this ability in her she let's them change her mind. I only know that because I've done it to her myself.

OLIVIA

I'm not sure whatchur askin', Maggie, but at this point you can't do any worser than I am wit' Lizzy, right now.

MAGGIE takes OLIVIA'S hand and holds it.

MAGGIE

Sweetheart, I don't know if this moment we're having will ever happen again. I'm an old woman and very set in my ways. So, you have to listen to me very carefully. You are a wonderful mother. I may seem self-absorbed, but I don't miss much. I have watched you with Lizzy and our Nicci. They adore you and you clearly would rather shoot yourself with your gun, rather than hurt them. None of this, in any way, shape or form, is your fault. Sure, you had an affair with him, but I know him for the evil in pleasing form that he is. Don't let anyone hold that against you. So, I repeat this in earnest, "None of this is your fault."

OLIVIA is crying, but smiling at the same time.

OLIVIA

Why don'tcha show this part o' you to yo' kids? I seen you wit' Nicci. You do know how ta show yo' love.

MAGGIE

Baby steps. Look how it's affected you! Can you imagine how much it would flip them out? Besides, I'm great with babies. After they hit puberty...that's when I punk out, as Mace would say.

MAGGIE stops speaking and looks off for a moment. ALICIA, OLIVIA and LIZZY shift, uncomfortably, in the awkward silence. MAGGIE turns to ALICIA, suddenly.

MAGGIE

Why do you think we do it, Alicia?

ALICIA

Que?

MAGGIE

Why do we favor our sons over our daughters? Why do we coddle our boys and treat our daughters more sternly?

ALICIA looks at OLIVIA. OLIVIA shrugs.

MAGGIE

Quite right. A conversation for another time. I'll make dinner and we'll have a little sit down. Right.

MAGGIE stands.

MAGGIE

So?

OLIVIA nods and stands, too. She goes to hug MAGGIE, but MAGGIE flinches.

MAGGIE

I'm not so good with that yet. Don't know if I'll ever be, but I do appreciate the thought. Besides, we've let Lizzy wait long enough, don't you think?

OLIVIA nods slowly, staring at MAGGIE with a confused look on her face. MAGGIE pats her lightly on the back.

MAGGIE

You have no idea.

OLIVIA opens the door and MAGGIE walks through. OLIVIA looks up at the ceiling.

OLIVIA

(whispers)

Mysterious ways, huh? Lo siento, Senor, pero you are one twisted Bein'!

OLIVIA exits and closes the door behind her.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -DAY

FRIDA is leaning against the wall at the foot of Mitchell's bed, staring at him.

FRIDA

So, it's just me and you, huh Dad? That's really all you had to do, when you hooked up with my mother. Be a dad. I know being a mom is hard, so I just assume being a dad is the same way. But you had practice, right? Your other kids you had with your first wife? I asked your daughter, once if you had ever done anything to her.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

That might explain why she doesn't talk to you now.

FRIDA

You're probably right, but I needed answers back then. She did tell me I was outta my fuckin' head, so I took that as a no.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

And you don't need any now?

FRIDA

No, I'm good. As I was saying, all you needed to do was to be a dad to me. Just like you were to your biological daughter, but you found that really hard didn't you? Pun intended. Was it because I wasn't your real daughter? Was that it?

MITCHELL (V.O.)

Thought you didn't need any answers.

FRIDA

I don't. It's a rhetorical question. I know why you did it.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

And why's that?

FRIDA

You're evil.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

Evil.

FRIDA

Sure. I can prove it.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

How?

FRIDA sits in the chair next to MITCHELL'S bed.

FRIDA

Evil takes a pleasing form. I mean, look at you. You're sixty-eight and you're like fuckin' Sean Connery, for chrissakes!

MITCHELL (V.O.)

Sean Connery?

FRIDA

You know. Those sexy senior citizen types. Also, you're very charming. Also an indication of evil.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

You mean everyone who's charming--

FRIDA

No, of course not. Not when it's used for good. You use it to manipulate. To get what you want from people. That make you evil.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

Any other evidence?

FRIDA

Your ability to look at a female child and have it arouse you sexually. That's the biggest piece of evidence.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

And they can't fix me.

FRIDA

No. They can't fix you. The evil is in you. That's why you're lying here in a coma. The evil has taken you over. What little good that might have been inside you is gone now. All that's left is black and stinking and corrupt.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

So, why not just turn everything off? Kill me?

FRIDA

That would be wrong. Evil.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

But it's what you want, isn't it? To listen to my last breath. To watch the life leave my body. Wouldn't that fill you with joy? Killing the man who stole your childhood and took your right to choose, out of your hands? It would be so easy, wouldn't it? Just reach over and pull the plug out of the wall. No more pain, no more Mitchell.

FRIDA stares at the plug for a long time.

FRIDA

I don't think so, Mitchell. I've given you enough power over me and my life. Besides, pain's a good thing. It helps us know we're alive. Without it how would we know comfort? No, I think this is something best left between you and Maggie.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

(laughing)

Good one, don't you think? Leave power of attorney in her hands so she'd have to decide this.

FRIDA

So you did it on purpose.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

If you say so, my angel.

FRIDA

Be careful, old man. Call me that again and I'll learn to live with killing you.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

Who's here?

FRIDA

Mason, Manny and me. Why?

MITCHELL (V.O.)

Where is my Mag-pie.

FRIDA

She'll be back. Said she had something to do. Why are you asking?

MITCHELL (V.O.)

Someone's missing.

YOUNG FRIDA leans over, inches from MITCHELL'S face.

YOUNG FRIDA

We're gonna make sure she retains her childhood. You may have infected her, but there's a cure for you.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

Without me, she'll never know comfort. You said that yourself.

YOUNG FRIDA

Yeah well that's why she's not here. Olivia's gonna fix her. She's got hope. You have...well, you have either minutes or years to live depending on Mom's decision.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

She'll never do it.

YOUNG FRIDA

You'd better hope she does, old man. I can't imagine anything worse than being stuck in that festering body of yours until God decides you've suffered enough.

MITCHELL (V.O.)

You sure I'll suffer? I mean I'll still be alive.
Still breathing in and out.

YOUNG FRIDA

True, but that's all you'll be doing. Breathing in
and out. No more women to manipulate. No
more little girls to defile. No more control over
anything. Not even your bowel movements.
Mason is right. You need to be left here to live
out your days as a vegetable fajita.

FRIDA sits back in the chair. Her eyes are closed and she is smiling.

INT. ALICIA'S LIVINGROOM -DAY

ALICIA and LIZZY are sitting on the sofa. MAGGIE and OLIVIA sit in chairs on
opposite sides of the coffee table.

OLIVIA

Lizzy?

LIZZY looks at her mother.

OLIVIA

You know Mrs. Juarez, right?

LIZZY looks over at MAGGIE.

MAGGIE

Hi, Lizzy. You can call me Maggie, if you like.

ALICIA

What is this?

OLIVIA puts her finger to her lips and shakes her head.

LIZZY

My mom says it's disrespectful to call grown-
ups by their first names.

MAGGIE

She's right. But there's an exception to that.
You can because I say you can. It's my name,
right?

LIZZY nods.

MAGGIE

Then it's ok. Let me just say that I know what has happened and I won't tell a soul. No, your Mom didn't tell me. I know what happened because it happened to my little girl, too.

LIZZY sits up and blows her nose. She is captivated.

MAGGIE

I used to be married to Mitchell, did you know that?

LIZZY

Nicci's Papi tol' me that, once.

MAGGIE

Manny? Well, he's my son.

LIZZY

I know that. That's how you're Nicci's abuela.

MAGGIE

(smiling)

Sorry. Of course you do. I keep forgetting how much smarter your generation is than I was at your age. If you get the feeling that I'm treating you like a child, it's only because I'm so much older than you. I don't mean any disrespect. OK?

LIZZY nods. She isn't crying anymore. OLIVIA and ALICIA glance at each other and then at LIZZY. They, too, are captivated.

MAGGIE

Well, as I was saying. I was married to Mitchell and he was the one that hurt my little girl the way he hurt you. The only difference is that I knew, deep inside, that something was wrong with him before he did it, but I did nothing about it. You know what I mean?

LIZZY

I think so. It's like when I know I'm gonna get in trouble for doin' somethin' I know I'm not s'posed ta do, but I do it anyway, because it be that good.

MAGGIE

That's exactly it. You are a very smart girl, Lizzy. Little Girl Talk?

LIZZY nods.

MAGGIE

Sorry. Now, I know you think Mitchell loves you. He doesn't because he can't love anyone. He's mentally ill and the things he did to you were against the law. Isn't that right, Olivia?

OLIVIA, who is crying, nods. ALICIA is sitting back with her arms across her chest, watching LIZZY and MAGGIE.

LIZZY

You mean he's crazy?

MAGGIE

The worst kind of crazy, Lizzy, because he hurt my little girl and he hurt you. Anyone that can hurt a child on purpose has got to be crazy, don't you think?

No one answers MAGGIE and they all sit quietly for a moment.

LIZZY

Is your little girl a freak like me? Does she like to touch herself?

MAGGIE

Honestly, Lizzy I don't know if she touches herself or not. I do know she's not a freak. She's very strong and she's a mother herself, now. A good mother. She's also smarter than I am. You're feeling hurt and confused right now, aren't you?

LIZZY

Like I'm different than everybody else, but I don't know why. How do i know when somebody tells me they love me, that they're tellin' the truth?

OLIVIA

Lizzy, you feelin' things you can't deal wit' on your own. That's why I think we need to talk ta somebody that can help us.

LIZZY

Us?

OLIVIA

Sure. I tol' you I'm witcha the whole way.!

ALICIA

Yo tambien, mijita.

LIZZY

What about Mitchell?

MAGGIE

What about him, sweetheart?

LIZZY

He said if I tol' anybody, he'd hurt me.

MAGGIE

Not if I have anything to say about it. And it just so happens that I do.

LIZZY gets up and goes over to MAGGIE and hugs her. At first MAGGIE doesn't respond, but then she wraps her arms around LIZZY.

MAGGIE

(whispers)

Anything you need, anytime you need it, you call me. Ok?

LIZZY nods. MAGGIE lets go of her and stands up. ALICIA and OLIVIA stand, too. MAGGIE puts her handbag on her shoulder.

MAGGIE

Alicia, if you don't mind, I'd like us to get to know each other better.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (cont'd)

We may still turn out not liking each other, but at least we can give it a try. Is that alright with you?

ALICIA

Come eat and we can talk.

OLIVIA walks MAGGIE to the door and opens it for her.

MAGGIE

Thank you for letting me butt in.

OLIVIA

Thanks for talkin' to Lizzy. I really don't know what to say, Maggie.

MAGGIE turns to leave.

MAGGIE

You know something, Olivia? I have no right ta feel as good as I do now. I've caused so much trouble and Lizzy has such a long way ta go...

OLIVIA

--And you helped her start gettin' there. It's hard not ta feel good when ya help people, ain't it?

MAGGIE

Ain't it, though.

OLIVIA

Free ain't gonna believe this.

MAGGIE pauses at the door with her back to OLIVIA.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -DAY

Frida is standing at the window looking out.

MANNY (O.S.)

Don't jump!

Frida turns and holds out her tongue. Manny walks over to her.

FRIDA
So?

MANNY
No word from Mom?

FRIDA
No and I'm getting worried. Where do you think she is?

MANNY
You know what she asked the doctor?

FRIDA
Oh, I don't know. Probably something like, "Is Mitchell still aware?" or something like that.

MANNY
Vewy scawy.

FRIDA
What did he say?

MANNY
A lot of technical mumbo jumbo that added up to he didn't know.

FRIDA
Where is she now?

MANNY
Right there.

MANNY is looking out of the window and FRIDA glances to where he is pointing.

FRIDA
That can't be her. That lady's smoking.

MANNY
Nope. That's her.

FRIDA and MANNY look at each other. FRIDA shakes her head and sits down in the chair next to the window.

FRIDA
Even brain dead, he's getting the last word.

FRIDA gets up.

MANNY
Where you goin'?

FRIDA
Time for the first act of Mitchell the Last.

MANNY
Huh?

FRIDA leaves the room. MANNY turns back toward the window and watches as FRIDA approaches MAGGIE. They talk for a moment, then FRIDA takes the cigarette out of MAGGIE'S hand and MAGGIE lights another one. FRIDA stands and watches as MAGGIE takes a few more pulls and then puts it out. FRIDA follows MAGGIE back into the hospital. MANNY shakes his head as he sits in the chair near the window. He then stares at MITCHELL.

MANNY
You're lovin' this aintcha?

A few moments later, FRIDA and MAGGIE walk through the door and MASON is right behind them.

FRIDA
Mom, he's had enough control over this family, don't you think?

MANNY
We could just leave, ya know. Just leave him like this 'til his insurance runs out. Then they'll put him in some rest home where he'll get bed sores and his body'll wither away real slow.

MAGGIE
We could, but then we'd be no better than him. I'd like to think that no matter what we do or say to each other, we're not evil.

FRIDA
Not in a bad way.

The door opens and OLIVIA and LIZZY walk in. MAGGIE, MANNY, FRIDA and MASON are shocked to see them.

OLIVIA

She asked me where you were going and I told her. She through a fit 'til I bought her here.

Everyone watches as LIZZY stares at MITCHELL.

MAGGIE

Lizzy, you shouldn't be here.

FRIDA

Yeah, babygirl. You're supposed ta be--

LIZZY

Right here, Free. He don't look so big now. He looks real small.

OLIVIA bends down to say something to LIZZY, but LIZZY walks away from her, closer to MITCHELL'S bed.

FRIDA

He is, Lizzy. He did something really bad, tho.

LIZZY

To both of us.

MAGGIE goes over to OLIVIA and whispers to her. OLIVIA looks at her and nods. MAGGIE then turns and motions to MASON and MANNY to follow her and OLIVIA out of the room. Slowly and quietly they leave FRIDA and LIZZY standing together near MITCHELL'S bed.

LIZZY

Do you still think about it?

FRIDA

At least for a minute every day. I won't lie to you, Lizzy. It's gonna be hard to keep it from running your life. You--

LIZZY

I feel like somebody else. I look at things different now. I can't stop 'memberin' how it feels.

FRIDA sits down in the chair near the bed.

FRIDA

Come here.

LIZZY walks over to FRIDA.

FRIDA

I can't say that you'll ever stop remembering what he did and how it makes you feel. I can only suggest that you talk about. Talk about it and keep it from building inside your head. Talk about it until it just becomes words describin' something that happened to you, but doesn't rule you.

They look at MITCHELL for a moment. LIZZY looks up at the monitor and MAGGIE follows her gaze.

LIZZY

Can he here us?

FRIDA

I don't know. Maybe.

LIZZY

Do you hate him?

FRIDA

I used to. More than I loved myself. Now, he's what I call a non-person.

LIZZY

A non-person. Non-people shouldn't need to breathe, then. They shouldn't be, period.

FRIDA looks at LIZZY.

FRIDA

You couldn't live with yourself, baby girl.

LIZZY

Free, I don't know who myself is. I jus' know the new me starts here and there ain't no room for him in my new world. Ain't no room for non-people.

FRIDA closes her eyes for a moment. When she opens her eyes MAGGIE is standing just beyond the doorway signing something as DR. CRITTENDEN watches. FRIDA stands while holding LIZZY'S hand and they walk over to the machine monitoring MITCHELL'S life signs. FRIDA turns it off then turns to the machine breathing for MITCHELL and puts her finger on the switch.

LIZZY puts her finger on top of FRIDA'S and the machine clicks off. They watch as MITCHELL'S chest ceases to rise up and down.

FRIDA

I could really use some pancakes. How about you?

LIZZY giggles, then slaps her hand over her mouth, her eyes wide. FRIDA pulls her hand down and they walk toward the door.

FRIDA

Never silence giggles. Giggles are meant to be free to multiply.

LIZZY

Multiply?

FRIDA

You ever try to not laugh around someone who's giggling? It's impossible! Besides, it's against the law. Ask your mom.

LIZZY giggles, again as they leave the room. The door slowly closes behind them.

FADE TO BLACK.